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An artist's life

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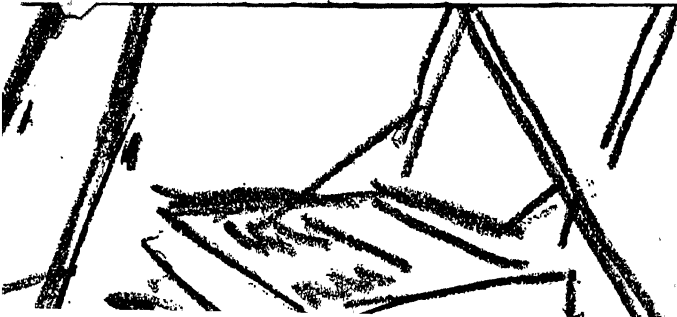
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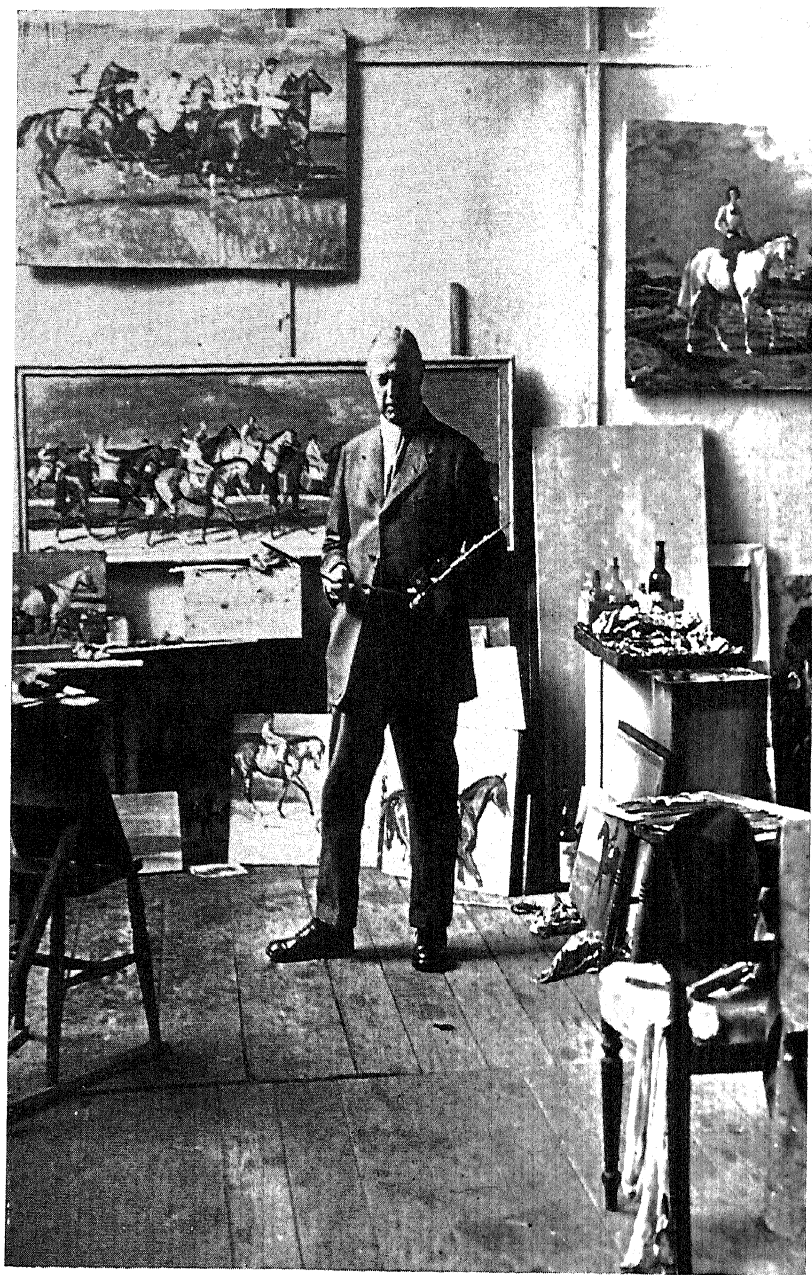
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# AN ARTIST'S LIFE







*In my Studio at Castle House, Dedham.*

*Frontispiece.*

*"I feel very lazy and loose,  
For pictures don't seem any use,  
But days that are sunny  
Are better than money,  
So working may go to the deuce."*



SIR ALFRED MUNNINGS

K. C. V. O.

*A Past President of the Royal Academy*

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AN ARTIST'S LIFE

*With 140 Illustrations  
by the Author*



THEODORE BRUN LIMITED, LONDON  
98 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.1

*First published 1950*

TO  
MY WIFE

*Printed in Great Britain  
by Richard Clay and Company Ltd.,  
Bungay, Suffolk*

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## P R E F A C E

PUBLISHERS tell me that people no longer read a book in two volumes. For all that, I shall keep these recollections of the earlier half of my life in a book by themselves. They record happier times, even though I had no money and was only making my way. In these pages I have tried to paint pictures in another medium. The book was begun in Exmoor—a country I love—and completed at Dedham, and it closes with the end of the first war, 1918, when I was forty.

After then things altered. My own way of life was changed. I left Norfolk and bought a house on the Essex and Suffolk border, and found a wife. Without her I should be bankrupt or dead. We built a house and studio in London, and I began painting portraits of all sorts of people on horseback; famous racehorses, winners of the Derby and Oaks, the Gold Cup, St. Leger and National.

A list of events does not make a book of recollections. If only one book is needed, then my last paragraph will suffice for a second volume, "turning the accomplishment of many years" into a few lines; doing away with buttercups and primroses and ghosts.

Too many memories come to the surface when dipping into the past, some better left lurking between the lines. After all, from start to finish, "Life is made up of trifles", as Trowbridge, an American poet, wrote long ago. Here is the last verse:

The red usurper reached the throne;  
The tidings over the realm were blown;  
And fleeing to alien lands alone  
With a trusty few, the King made moan,  
And long and loudly laughed the clown:  
"We broke the oar and the boat went down  
And so the messenger chanced to drown;  
The messenger lost, we lost the town,  
And loss of a town has cost a crown,  
And all these things are trifles."

I am happy to know that this book is printed at Bungay in Suffolk—my county.



## CHAPTER I

### MY FIVE LAST HORSES

**T**HIS is written on Tuesday, 13th June, 1944. I was elected President of the Royal Academy in March. The Birthday Honours List appeared last Thursday, and I am still receiving letters from friends of to-day, friends of the past and even from people I do not know. This being a real Exmoor day—a day of driving wind and rain—I lay late in bed reading more letters. Then I fell into a reverie. Who would have thought I should ever be President of the Royal Academy, or be knighted by the King? “What a go!” as an Essex farmer friend wrote to me in a letter. Then I thought, why not begin a book of recollections? It may never be finished or published. But others have done it.

Getting up later and gazing from the bathroom window, facing the stable yard, I beheld five heads looking out, as horses always will look out if free in a box with an open half-door.

Lucky horses, to be here at Withypool, in the middle of Exmoor. Little do they know there is a war on and how difficult it is for their anxious, loving owner to scheme and provide for them, keeping them well-fed and comfortable.

“How often, oh how often” have I telephoned to the hay-dealer at Tiverton, begging for a load of the best to be sent as soon as the weather allows, which it seldom does on Exmoor. Only yesterday one of those horses carried me on a quest to a quiet farm where I made a secret purchase of corn. Not easy to do in more civilised parts; but all things are possible of Exmoor, even farm butter and cream.

I watched the row of heads. First, Anarchist, height sixteen and a half hands—the best I ever rode—a bold, clever, unassuming and well-mannered horse, with a calm outlook on life. All jumps came alike to him, and he never gave me a fall. Bred in Normandy, schooled by a Saumur instructor, he was jumping more than six feet in French competitions as a four-year-old. My friend, Stewart Richardson, bought the horse for me at that age when he was in France looking for show-horses. Then Rufus, fifteen and a half hands, a strong, healthy brute, a chestnut with a white blaze and a head and crest like an Arab stallion—one of the best. Cheena next, my wife’s old friend and com-

panion. Sweet, kindly, long-suffering Cheena, with large ears, a kind eye and a beautiful forelock and mane. I love her. Then come two half-sisters, Winter Rose and Cherrybounce.

I bred these two from a Red Prince mare that my wife used to hunt in the Whaddon. The first, a lovely dark brown mare, sixteen hands, by The Winter King, who was a son of Signorinetta and the famous Son-in-Law. This mare shows her breeding, and has the formation and colour of her grandsire. What a head and eye! Like Rosemary, her dam, she's inclined to be queer. Anyhow, I've ridden her and used her as a model since she was foaled sixteen years ago, and she has more quality and beauty than many of the swell winners I've painted. Her half-sister, Cherrybounce, goes back on her sire's side to Fowling-piece. A year younger than Rose, a big, upstanding bay, sixteen and a half hands, with a white star on her forehead, a strong back and loin, thick, curly mane and tail, and good constitution. She's what you call a goer, and takes some holding; the best over a gate I've ever ridden. I've used her hard and often and never known her lame. She was schooled for us at Dauntsey by Stewart Richardson's famous stud-groom and showman, Taylor; and has never forgotten the manners he gave her, which are those of a perfect show hack—when she's not in a hunt! As one of many models, Cherrybounce has helped to run the show.

These five horses, with one called The Lizard, lent out, are all I have left of seventeen when war began. The rest are over the Styx now, but not enjoying a happier life, for they were happy with me. They could even choose their own paddocks.

I want to start like this with horses. Although they have given me much trouble and many sleepless nights, they have been my supporters, friends—my destiny, in fact. Looking back at my life, interwoven with theirs—painting them, feeding them, riding them, thinking about them—I hope that I have learned something of their ways, appetite, outlook and ideas. I have never ceased trying to understand them. Yet how many of us do? If we did, we should be called “cranks”.

Having started and made my bow with these last remaining horse-friends of to-day—friends which have helped to place me where I now stand—I will dive down into the long-buried past. If I begin with the clearest memories, which are of horses, don't imagine this is to be a book on horses. Too many people have already written such books. When early memories come surging up it is not easy to sort them out. But let me begin and not hesitate.

Thus, driving with my father—as I often drove with him along a certain piece of road. It was then the grey mare. I can see her now as plainly as one of my own to-day—a fair-sized, well-bred mare, all quality and with a temperament. I can see those pricked-up ears in front of us and the short, silky, silver mane in the breeze. I hear her hooves on the road, the jingle of the silver-mounted harness and the sound of the wheels as we bowled along. The mare was tossing her head up and down, and my father was saying something to me about the bit and the curb-chain—things I knew nothing of. Then he pulled up, got down and did something to the mare's head—I should now guess that he was letting the curb-chain out a link. After doing this he again got up beside me, and we drove on. That incident will never be forgotten. I see my father wearing a tall grey hat and a light-coloured alpaca coat. I have not even forgotten the yellow rosebud in his buttonhole. We had a light biscuit-coloured summer rug over our knees. The whole turnout had a spruce, summery appearance.

Another incident. Although very young, my brother and I were away at a sort of dame's school at Laxfield in Suffolk. This was kept by two sisters, Miss Jane Read and Miss Alice Read. Jane was stoutish and wore a fringe. Alice was turning grey and had a red face. Both were kind. We were there, I believe, because of our mother's illness at the time. I was nearly four, and went about with Randolph Caldecott's pictures in my mind, for the Misses Read had the Christmas number of the *Graphic* of the early 'eighties, and I remember those pictures even more than the landscape around Laxfield. So when my father came to see us on my fourth birthday, bringing with him a beautiful toy horse—a dun-coloured horse with a black mane and tail and a head that nodded up and down—being full of Caldecott, I called it Merrylegs; the name taken from a *Graphic* Christmas number wherein Caldecott had pictured a country wedding with snow, grey horses, postboys, wedding bells and breakfast and the young lady who got married going to the stables to say good-bye to her horse Merrylegs. I can see the Misses Read, my father, ourselves, and the horse on the table, with its head nodding up and down.

Another Laxfield scene. The wide village street. Its church and Wolf Inn, and a country crowd at a fair. My first ride on a dapple-grey horse, which I clothed in beauty and sacred wonder. I even dreamt about it. The Steam Horses, they were called!

One scene leads naturally to another—a circus at Harleston. We all went with the governess. I could never understand the

appearance of the piebald and skewbald horses. I saw them in a strange, mystic light—a glow; and one in particular, with a lovely lady in pink tights on its back, seemed to be coloured like a strawberry shorthorn cow. I see the horse yet, with arched neck and flowing mane; and its lovely rider floating through the air as she passed high above where we were sitting. I see the transparent green light of the tent—I even smell the trodden grass.

A distinct scene of my earliest days, which for some strange reason remains clear and more unclouded than others, is my Aunt Rosa's wedding, with grey horses and white rosettes. I see them trotting up to Walsham Hall, the old farmhouse where my grandmother Ringer lived. At the wedding breakfast there were tables on three sides of the low-ceilinged parlour. Peeping through the door, I saw Aunt Rosa, the bride, sitting with the bridegroom in the centre of the row of guests along the opposite wall, with the large wedding-cake in front of them. She called out to me, "Come and have a syllabub, Alfy". I was bashful, and the backs of the chairs were so close to the wall that I couldn't get round to her. "Crawl under the table," said Aunt Rosa, and I remember diving under the white table-cloth among legs and feet and coming up on the other side between the bride and bridegroom. I was given syllabubs, known as the king of sweetmeats. They were made of whipped cream, loaf-sugar rubbed on lemon-peel, and sherry—a divine concoction belonging to the days of plenty. Then, later, the carriage and dapple-grey horses with white rosettes came for the bride and bridegroom, and as it went away, a fat lady in a silk dress threw an old shoe, which remained on the top of the carriage as it disappeared round the corner. I remember the taste of the syllabubs and the sight of those grey horses from the Magpie Hotel at Harleston. They were, no doubt, quite ordinary greys, but let me cling to my dream of beauty.

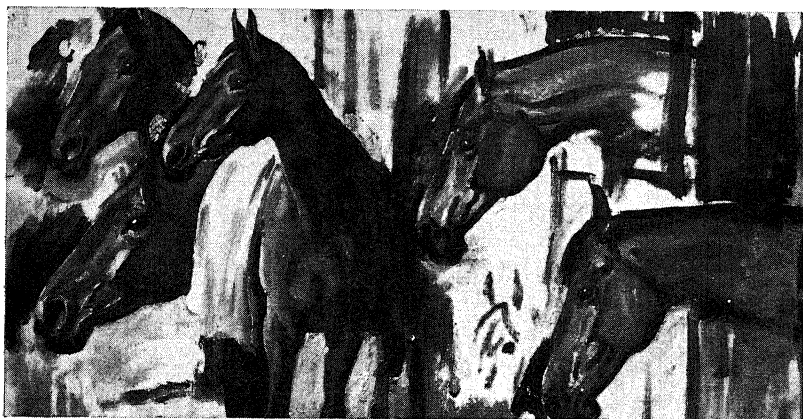
Here is another picture of our Mendham home. The scene is an upstairs room known as the nursery;—bars across the lower half of the window to prevent us from getting or falling out. *Graphic* Christmas number pictures were pasted, overlapping, on the walls, and there was a fireguard. It was after tea, when we—the governess and ourselves—suddenly heard the sound of a galloping horse coming down the lane. We flew to the window in time to see the grey mare flash by and over the bridge into the stable yard, with only the shafts of the dogcart left in the tugs at her sides.

We saw Saxby, the groom, come out of the stables and lead

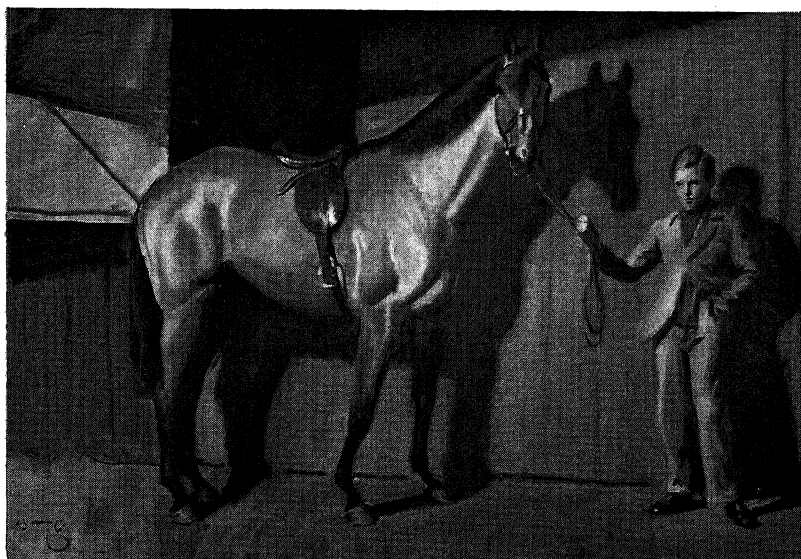




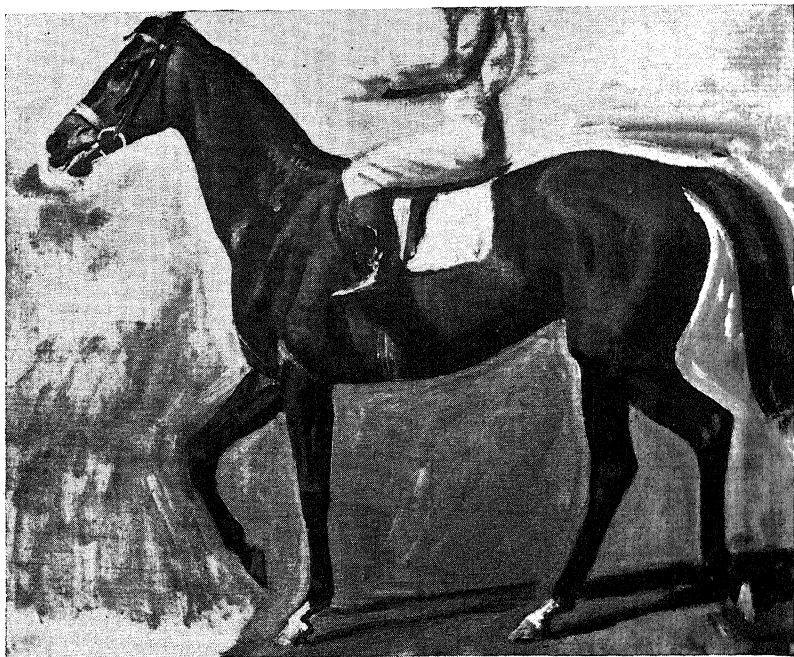
*Anarchist, Rufus and Cherrybounce at exercise. See page 13.*



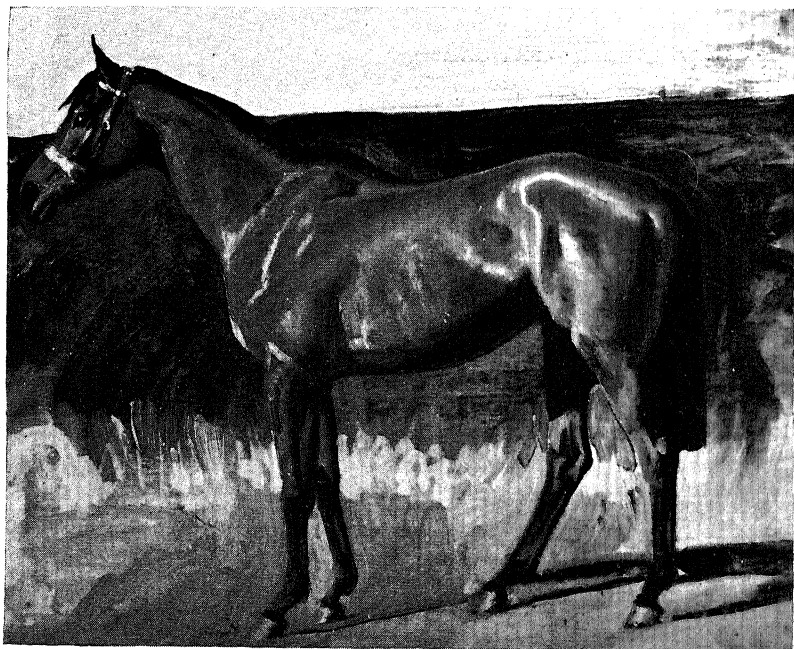
*"Sweet, kindly, long-suffering Cheena (two heads on right), with large ears and a kind eye." Studies of Anarchist (left). See page 14.*



*Anarchist : "A bold, clever, unassuming and well-mannered horse, with a calm outlook on life." See page 13.*



*Rose, "a dark-brown mare, 16 hands, by the Winter King, a son of Signorinetta and the famous Son-in-Law." See page 14.*



*Cherrybounce : "She's the best over a gate I've ever ridden . . . and what a tail—beautiful." See page 14.*

her in; then he dashed out and joined the men from the mill, all running up the lane. This was excitement indeed for the nursery! There we sat, awaiting events. After some minutes of suspense, we saw my father limping along, holding the shoulders of old Sam and young Sam Notley, followed by Dick Palmer, and other millhands carrying my uncle on a hurdle. Then I remember we were called down to see Father on the couch, with his head all bandaged up, and we, standing there, trembling with fear,—he asking, “What would you all have done if your poor father had been killed?”

I don’t know what we said then, or what happened to Uncle Willie with a broken leg, but I can plainly see that scene in the parlour, and now know that my father and uncle had been playing whist all the afternoon (market day) at the Magpie. Irish whiskey was the cause of that spill,\* if not of others. Besides, my father often had fresh horses, and he liked something that could go.

One horse I recollect clearly because it was called Nat Langham. I didn’t then know it was named after a famous fighter or boxer. Charlie was another nice horse, a dark chestnut with a light mane and tail, and I was fond of him. The salesman or foreman, Robert Self, used to drive Charlie in a tall, light-running sulky with red wheels. My mother was anxious if Father went out in that vehicle; and no wonder. One story he always told was of getting into a snow-drifted ditch in Christmas Lane, near Metfield, on a dark night in a blizzard—horse and all—and being dug out, and sleeping in a farmer’s bed. As he grew old, he drove ponies instead of horses, the reason being, as he said, that there wasn’t so far to fall.

Grey horses were always my delight; my imagination stirred at the sight of them. I have told of the grey mare with dapples and silky silver mane and queer temper. She remains the same spirited creature in my mind now as she appeared to me long ago. Clean-curved, nervous ears, a long neck, black legs and hard tendons with a white hind leg. Her mane was well kept, she had a smart docked tail and looked a picture in silver-mounted harness. Then there was Merrylegs, a white pony about 13.2 hands, also docked, but not so beautiful as the mare.

A horse which I lived with and saw every morning as we knelt at family prayers was in an old oil-painting hanging in a plain maple frame. This was of a grey horse with a full eye and ears pricked, standing in a landscape with a cloudy sky behind which emphasised its white form. The distance, full of interest, was

\* It may have been a tight curb-chain!

painted with care, and no doubt was the same distance that the artist had used in many other horse portraits. I last saw the picture in my mother's home. At the bottom of the canvas was written: "Grey Horse—Orinoco—the property of William Green Munnings of Stoke-by-Nayland. J. Hobart, Pinxt 1840."

It was painted direct and freshly, and the painter knew his craft and a horse well enough to please his clients. In my school days, with slightly more matured judgment, I speculated upon the painting of the picture. Who was Hobart, the artist, who painted this horse twenty-five years after Waterloo? What was he like? How old? I have read that he lived at Monks Eleigh. And now in my present state, with developed ideas of pictures and painting, I am more and more curious as to what sort of men they were who did these pictures for people in certain areas, in this county or that. What did they look like? Did they drive about with their own horse and cart, and stay with their clients while doing the picture?

What an event to think of! The commission by letter, or given on a market day at Sudbury, Ipswich or Bury St. Edmunds. The day arrives on which the artist is expected. The horse has been well done and groomed. The family is full of curiosity. "Mr. Hobart is here, sir," says a servant. The master and mistress appear, as the artist gets his things out of the cart. I cannot believe,—I may have to, alas!—that he brought only his drawing materials; or that he merely made notes, painting his picture afterwards from memory. Whatever he did, I like to imagine the horse being led out, a chair brought from the kitchen and the job beginning with the family staying a moment to watch.

A boy—a George Morland boy—comes to look.

"Break a switch from the fence and keep the flies away for the gentleman."

A man with a carhorse stops and stares, and goes on his way, the chains clinking. Thus the artist, whoever he is, gets to his task, the watchers returning to theirs, and he is left alone.

Weeks later, the painting in its frame is delivered, approved, paid for and hung.

I am sure this one gave satisfaction. What sort of figure was paid for it? Five guineas, perhaps. The size of the picture was about thirty inches by twenty-four. Balancing it—the same size—and framed in the same style, was a portrait of a fat heifer weighing so many hundredweights, bred by William Green Munnings, Esq., etc., etc., of Stoke, also by J. Hobart. Although it has nothing to do with grey horses, I mention it as a pendant

only, for the two paintings, with that of my great-grandmother in a lace cap, were the sole pictorial attractions for me in those boyhood days at home.

In this—my present home—I have hanging in a room upstairs another picture of a white horse with a squire on its back, which, although never a possession of the Mendham household, always drew me to it when we drove into Harleston and put the horse and trap up at the Magpie Hotel. The picture hung in the entrance hall, and in my sophisticated sight it looks the same to-day as it did then—far better, in fact, for I did not then know how good it was, and little did I dream I should ever possess it.

It may have been fifteen or twenty years ago. I was motoring, and stayed at the Magpie, which was under new management, and, to my surprise, there was the print still hanging in its old place. Before leaving, the landlord offered it to me in exchange for a print of one of my own pictures. I am sure I had the best of the deal, and he was sure he had. Of course I had, and I mean to give him something which I hope may yet balance the transaction. This well-beloved print is a portrait of a Mr. Anthony Freestone, seated on a grand old white horse, with his harriers.

I may be writing backwards if I describe it with my later and more sophisticated knowledge. The famous Mr. Freestone came of an ancient family in those parts. Anthony, or Squire Freestone, as the country folk called him, wears in the picture a half top hat, has short, grey whiskers, strong eyebrows, a good nose, clean-shaven mouth and looks a stiff-built man of about sixty in his hunting coat, cords and top boots. The horse is drawn well, a rare sort: low, short-legged, with a good head and crest and banged tail. I think I know how the Squire spoke; slowly, deliberately, with some style of address. The hounds are around him, and the large, many-gabled farmhouse at St. Margarets, where he lived, is in the background. Looking at the Squire, with his keen eye, his long hunting-crop, his cords and tops, I try to imagine what he and his household were like. His house still stands away in the fields at St. Margarets, once upon a time a hub of that small country, and not the least bit "out of the way", as they call it now. A world of its own, with grooms, servants, cellars with port and home-brewed ale; four-year-old mutton and all the rest of the good things of life of that day. He looks a man who had everything right about him and was respected and thought a lot of. The picture, according to the description below it, was presented to him by members of the Suffolk Hunt, and the prints subscribed for.

Walsham Hall, where my grandmother Ringer lived, was not so far away. She used to know the Squire, and talked of his hounds and the farmers who followed them in the parishes known as the Saints, named after the Apostles, St. Peter, St. John, St. James and the rest. The country lay between Halesworth and Bungay, with farms on the small side, with deep clay ditches to drain the heavy soil, and thick, hairy fences, which in Anthony Freestone's day may have been well-trimmed or cut-and-laid, and new, because so much of this land was enclosed when the common lands were taken. A good country for a hunt!

## CHAPTER II

### NURSERY RHYMES

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow  
And what will the Robin do then? poor thing!  
He'll sit in a barn,  
And keep himself warm,  
And hide his head under his wing. Poor thing!

I have called up this beloved rhyme from the past, and now it runs on and on in my head. A lovely, simple piece of poetry. Only now do I wonder if robins ever got in the barns to be warm. It brings back the nursery, the fireguard, the view from the window. It brings back:

A frog he would a-wooing go,  
Heigho! says Roly;  
Whether his mother would let him or no;  
So off he set with his opera hat  
And on the road he met with a rat,  
With a roly-poly, gammon and spinach,  
Heigh-ho! says Anthony Roly.

Can you beat it? How rich our childhood was in those books illustrated by Caldecott! And what songs we had!

Three blind mice,  
See how they run!

And there was the everlasting "Old Mother Hubbard", and what a commotion there was when a cousin, more sophisticated than we, came out with the rhyme:

Old Mother Hubbard  
She said, "I'll be b——d".

Another popular rhyme we loved was:

Jack Sprat could eat no fat,  
His wife could eat no lean,  
And so between them both, you see,  
They scraped the platter clean.

I still see Jack Sprat and his wife as I saw them then: a bright, busy, nippy pair, fussing around and scraping the plate. These rhymes bring back the nursery, the pictures on the walls: "Cherry Ripe" and "Red Riding Hood" and the rest. I see the fireguard in front of the fire. I see ourselves sitting round listening

to Uncle Remus—then the rage; laughing until we cried over Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit. Not only do these rhymes bring back the nursery to my mind, they take me to Walsham Hall.

I can remember being very young when staying at Walsham Hall—so young that I slept in a big, four-poster bed with my grandma. She wore a night-cap, and by the light of a candle and the occasional use of a pair of snuffers, read to me out of a little book called *Bogatsky*. She read also short stories—one about George Washington and the hatchet, and how he couldn't tell a lie.

One memorable night there was a terrific thunderstorm which lasted for hours, with vivid, frightening flashes of lightning all the time. It was so alarming that my night-capped grandma pinned the curtains together all round the bed, shutting out the blue flickering flashes.

I could never see enough of the carthorses which were often in the strawyard all together—I adored them, and can yet describe my favourites. There was Briton, a thick, curly-maned, dark chestnut horse. I should say he was one of the old breed of Suffolk Punch. Then there was Moggie, a rich, liver-coloured chestnut mare with long, pale mane and tail. Her colouring appealed to my artistic sense. Then the horse I used to ride at harvest on the trace—Proctor, a dark bay. Another, a bay mare, with long, black, curly mane and tail, was Diamond. A similar one was Smart; and a lighter stamp of horse, Stormer, a dark brown which was often used to walk round and round on the chaff-cutting machine. Depper, a dark, dappled chestnut with pale yellow flanks. Short, a dark chestnut with grey hairs about him. Then Prince; and last of all—I see her now—Doughty, another rich, dappled chestnut with lightish mane and tail. There were colts in numbers.

These went out on summer nights on the large home meadow which sloped away from the lane in front of the house. Ancient, gnarled oaks stood on this pasture, and at the bottom end, near the gate, were a horse-pond, cart-sheds and tall elms. In the nag stable was an old mare called Jenny, a dun pony, Billy, with a black stripe down his back, and a horse my Uncle Arthur was riding and schooling, called Spitfire. I was sometimes put up in front of him when my uncle rode about the farm. He was a darkish bay with a white face and white fetlock and arched neck, and a lot of spirit and fire—hence his name.

The men styled as horsemen on the farm were Jonah Corbyn and a father and his sons called Sowter, one nicknamed Blucher. This kind fellow would put me on the back of any horse he was



working. He had a brother Charley—their father was old Charley. Often I have watched them seated under a hedge, eating dinner, their plough-teams halted on the headland.

Walsham Hall, adjoining the parish of St. Cross, was an old, well-built, Suffolk farm-house. From the front hall a wide, shallow, solid oak staircase, with a tall clock on the landing, led upstairs to bedrooms which had an atmosphere of peace and quiet. I have never felt quite the same stillness as that which reigned in those low-ceilinged rooms. Dressing-tables were draped with patterned chintz and lace. Wool-worked pictures, coloured prints—one of “Cherry Ripe”, by Millais—hung on the walls, and the chairs and chests of drawers were old and good, as we knew years later when my grandmother gave up the farm, and all the stock and some of the furniture were sold. The substantial back premises of the house, in full use, were in accordance with such a place, which, in those days in the heart of Suffolk, was self-supporting, even to the making of its own candles with mutton-fat. There was a large kitchen with an oak table in the centre; a tall clock in a corner; a clothes-mangle and press along the sides, and rows of home-cured bacon and hams in smoked bags hanging from hooks in the beams of the ceiling.

Beyond this was a larger back kitchen or bakehouse, with a wide oven where faggots were burnt on baking days until the inside became a fiery glow. I can see Charley Sowter raking out the hot embers before the things ready for baking were pushed in with a long, flat, iron shovel. Then came the cold dairy, where I used to see Charley turning the great churn till the butter was made. Large round pans full of milk stood on stone shelves, pots of cream and pounds of butter and baskets of eggs stood on other shelves. Nearby was the storeroom, where I loved to follow an aunt, if only to gaze at all the pots of jams and cakes in the cupboard. A cheeseroom, too, I remember; dry and cold. What cheeses! Next to the bakehouse was the brewhouse, where rows of barrels of home-brewed stood on trestles along the wall. Then there was the faggot and wood house, where a lad chopped sticks and cleaned knives. Often with me did that lad eat short-cakes hot out of the brick oven.

The life of this household were three young aunts—aunts Edith, Mary and Rosa. Young and full of fun, they were all married in due course. My grandma seemed very old to me, and yet she had dark, smooth hair which was parted in the middle. She wore a lace cap always and a white woollen shawl in the evenings.

The last three words—“in the evenings”—bring with them a

picture of parlour and dining-room brightly lit and glowing in candle-light. Holly and mistletoe. Aunts, uncles and people wearing cracker caps. Crackers going off. Snap-dragon—raisins in a dish of wavering blue flame.

Songs—Aunt Mary singing "Just a Song at Twilight", my mother at the piano. Then dancing; and, best of all, Grandma playing her lovely, old-fashioned, fast polka, faster and faster, everyone merry and gay.

Final scene—"Hunt the Slipper", followed by a game called "Twilight" or "Spin the Trencher", and "Blind Man's Buff", the two last always in the kitchen.

When staying there I once was in one of those uncontrolled rages such as can boil up only in the bosom of a bad boy—defiant and regardless of consequences. My Aunt Mary and Aunt Edith had pursued me into the big back kitchen.

"Hold him. Take down his knickers," cried one aunt to another as she seized the large, iron frying-pan off the wall.

Aunt Mary held my head down, Aunt Edith spanked my bare behind with the black bottom of the pan. Then they blacked my nose, and let me go, a crestfallen, humbled boy.

When in later years I used to see those merry young girls grown into old women, they still called me Alfie. The Walsham Hall family of Ringers have since passed away, excepting Aunt Rosa.

A clear memory of my great-grandmother must be quite one of my earliest mind-pictures. An old lady with a nightcap, white hair and a hooked nose, who sat up in a four-poster bed, and who gave me sweet biscuits, which became an attraction. Then one day, when I was creeping up the old stairs for a biscuit, an aunt caught me and led me down, telling me Grandma had gone. I never knew where or when she had gone, and I can't remember being at all concerned about her disappearance. I was full of thoughts about the biscuits.

The walk from our home to Walsham Hall was our violet-and-primrose-gathering journey. A signpost stood where the lane forked. On the right arm was written "To Bridleways", which led on past the farm. On the left arm, "To St. Cross, Homersfield, Flixton and Bungay". This left-hand turning was the best of all our walks, for it led on to footpaths by spinneys, and in the spring a strong scent of violets pervaded one particular bank. This scent came from white violets. Why we should, each spring, go to that spot, anticipating the delicious smell, and why there should be intense excitement in plucking those rare and hidden flowers, I can't imagine, but it was always the same each

season. If I went there next spring, all the years in between would fade away. The governess and my brothers would be back in that spot with me again; but there would be no round-topped gypsies' tent and cart in the grass lane on the left now.

How frightened we were one day when, running on far ahead, we suddenly came level with that lane opening and saw a tent, and a dark man sitting by a fire! Our hearts stopped—we stood transfixed—then, turning, dashed back in terror to those behind.

A mile on round a bend to the left was paradise. This was a shallow ford where a stream, called Sconce Beck, crossed the lane. Why it was so called I don't know. There was a wooden footbridge over the stream at the right of the ford. In summer luxuriant rushes, meadowsweet and ragged robins grew there, and a group of elms stood near. Just across this ford, on the left, a gateway led into a grass track running through a spinney of Scotch firs to the foot of a high, sandy hill thickly grown with broom. This was known as Target Hill, where on certain afternoons a red flag flew and rifle-firing went on. The ringing, echoing shots always made me think about "the distant and random gun" in the poem we used to sing, "The Burial of Sir John Moore":

We buried him darkly at dead of night, etc.

As our mother played the piano and sang with us, her eyes filled with tears. So did ours as we pictured the scene we sang of.

## CHAPTER III

### MENDHAM MEMORIES

EACH Sunday my father read the lessons in Mendham church, and often in such style that folk walked from other parishes to hear him. He read parts of the Old Testament in the grand manner, and kept his eye on us over the brass eagle. Overhead a swallow or bat would fly up and down under the old roof, where arched supports rested on carved half-figures. I knew those figures by heart, and wove curious ideas about them. For I gazed up at them through many sermons. My father, in spite of his week-day jaunts, was deeply religious, and stood with his right hand on the poppy-head of our pew repeating the responses in a loud and determined manner, especially the part about being "Dam'd".

For a period my mother played the organ, but she was less orthodox than father, and latterly seldom went to church. At times, in good and dutiful mood, I used to blow the organ-bellows for her when she practised. I was a sentimental boy, and on one occasion when doing this, the sad and melancholy notes of the organ in the empty church brought me to tears; for that day we had lost our favourite red-poll pedigree calf, which we had called Lady Rowena, from *Ivanhoe*. The music seemed a dirge, and with a lump in my throat, a chill of sheer misery made me cry out again and again, "Rowena is dead, Rowena is dead!" Yet those lugubrious wailing notes went on vibrating above and around in the growing gloom of the November evening, and I grew more and more dismal.

I am still sentimental, and feel the same to-day when I see and hear the mounted band of the Life Guards—grey horses again; or the boys singing Grace before a City dinner. I insert here some pages from my mother's short diary in which she not only gives an interesting picture of the far-off days of her girlhood in 1867; but also tells of the restoration of the church. One can well imagine what the old interior looked like before this senseless restoration, which alas! was happening everywhere at the time.

*Extract from mother's diary referring to Church and Sunday School.*

"Sitting in the Church, my thoughts wander to the past and it is again peopled with old faces in the high pews, the organ is in the gallery and either Miss Burton or Miss Louisa Beaumont playing. Then the Sunday School was held at 9 am. and 2 pm., and the old

room was crowded. Miss Eglington, the school mistress, presided, and excellent order she kept. The children were divided into six or seven classes, sitting on forms arranged in squares. I was very proud when first allowed to have a class. The elder girls sat in the gallery and sang, the others had forms in the chancel and were under Miss Beaumont's eye. The boys were grouped on forms round the font in charge of old Johnson the Sexton, commonly called, Sire Johnson. He had a peeled ash stick and it was frequently heard on the head of a boy who was misbehaving. Mr. Brereton was the Vicar then. He was considered one of the best preachers in the neighbourhood and our church was always well attended, all the families living at the Mendham part of Harleston driving down every Sunday.

"The restoration of the church was commenced in April, 1867, and the nave was bricked up and morning service held in the chancel. Mr. Brereton, that summer, took duty at St. Cross and Homersfield, for Mr. Rose, the Rector, who was away—we generally drove Mr. Brereton. Our church was opened the following winter, and the preacher at the morning service was Mr. Owen, rector of Heveringham, a very popular preacher, his wife was a Miss Holmes of Gawdy Hall. The Bishop (Pelham) preached in the afternoon. It was quite a gala day in Mendham, the Weybread choir assisted in the singing and Mr. Bryant played the organ.

"About this time a great revival took place in Church Music, and several villages round here joined the Diocesan Choral Association, which provides trainers, and we had a Mr. Honifold to instruct our Choir, also Fressingfield, Metfield and Weybread. I think I first played the organ in 1869, the old finger organ. In 1872 we had the present organ erected by Bayton of Ipswich. The opening was a grand affair, Mr. Hemstock of Diss being the organist, and Archdeacon Groom the preacher. Mrs. Elborne, Mrs. Shearing's daughter, used to play when she came over, and wonderful effects she got from the instrument. She taught me a great deal. I played the first Sunday after it was opened and for several Sundays, and I had already had lessons and was taking morning service at St. John's, Harleston, for which I was paid £15 per annum by Mr. W. M. Hazard. As I have said before, Mendham church was very popular, young men from Harleston walked down in the afternoons, and a full church was the rule—now it is sad to see the empty benches. In those days it was not considered respectable to stay away from Church, most of the farmers went in the mornings, and they congregated at the chancel door, all wearing top hats, for their gossip, filing in at the last minute.

"A word about our school treats which were great events, invitations to it and the dance which followed at the Vicarage being greatly coveted. Everyone contributed to the commissariat department, bread, butter, cakes, fowls, sweets etc for the supper, and everybody was happy. The old women and mothers were invited, and one standing event was old Mrs. Feaviour's song and polka,—she was a wonderful old body. She lived in the cottage down the drift to the Walsham Hall Marshes 65 years and was famous for her garden and fruit. The produce she used to make pay her rent. The people here live to a great age—there are several now over ninety."

The past is gradually taking shape. Thinking again of my father's fast driving and the accident with the grey mare takes

me back from church to stables, and I see the pet monkey which lived there. Sometimes it was fastened with a long, light chain; sometimes it was free. It was not a small monkey, and was looked upon as an amusing curiosity rather than a pet. When free, it turned up anywhere: in the cherry-trees after the ripe fruit, or swinging aloft in the tops of the weeping ash-trees on the lawn. I see it being pursued in the house, where it got to the top of a four-poster bed with an apple. Only Saxby the groom was able to handle it, although one hot Sunday I saw my father throw it in the river to show a visitor how it could swim, which seems to me, now, an unkind act. I recall to mind a scene in the stables—Saxby trying to catch the monkey (it must have been a female, poor thing). It was sitting on the back of a rugged-up horse, embracing two newly-born, mewling kittens. Below was the mother cat, as helpless as the groom. Each time he tried to catch the monkey, it sprang from the horse's back to the loose-box partition, and on again to the next horse and next partition, and finally up to a beam above, where it was left to console itself with the kittens. I was really afraid of the monkey, even when it was fastened up. One day as I went into the stables it tried to reach me at the end of its chain. There was I yelling with fear by the corn-bin, the monkey on its hind feet pulling at its chain and not quite able to clutch my legs. I remember Saxby appearing and sending it flying with a half-filled bag of chaff. There were more escapades, and finally, after getting into the maids' bedroom and scaring them out of their wits, my mother said she wouldn't have a monkey on the place, and it was given away. On summer days, driving past its new home, we could see it sitting on a barrel placed on a tall post on the lawn. Poor monkey! no more friendly horses, no more adventures. I think of it now with pity. No pity was in our hearts then; we were too young. Poor monkey! in a northern climate, away from any of its kind; cast among stupid, ignorant humans and their young, not caring what became of it.

We had a nanny-goat, too, which had a black stripe down its back. The goat pulled us in a little four-wheeled cart. We seemed to take it as part of our life, and thought little of it. I don't even know when we last used it. But I have painted goats since, in gypsy pictures, and have wished I had paid more regard to that kind creature which used to pull the youngest of us about, with the governess walking.

Of course we had tame rabbits, but I wasn't keen on them. I always wanted to ride the white pony Merrylegs. I dreamt about her and called her mine, and when my father walked to

Redenhall church, some three miles away, on a Sunday afternoon, I used to ride this white pony. If two of us went with him we both rode on the pony, one behind the other—I being always in front, for I hated the round edge of the brim of my brother's straw sailor hat scratching my forehead. What quarrels we had over such rides!

In those days there was a post on Sunday mornings, but no delivery. I often rode to Harleston, two and a half miles away, with the stiff brown-leather post-bag, for the letters. I was so small that if I got off the pony I couldn't get on again, and so I used to sit in fear of heaven knows what, until someone in the post office saw me and brought out the letters. I was six years old then, and adored that pony.

When my father finally took to driving fourteen-hand ponies, I ventured to ride them as I grew bolder, never telling quite all that happened. Yet I stuck to it in spite of being chucked off again and again. I was told never to let go the reins, and so more than once I was dragged along on my stomach on the miry lanes. The job then was to mount, for those ponies were full of corn. They did a big mileage, my father often attending six different markets a week, some of them a long way off. Monday—Eye, fourteen miles. Tuesday—Halesworth, fourteen. Wednesday—Harleston, near by. Thursday—Bungay. Friday—Diss, about eleven. Saturday—Framlingham, seventeen. And now and then he went to Norwich, twenty miles. These journeys were not always direct, and he drove according as his business lay.

Once I remember I had been despatched in haste to catch a waggoner who had started at six in the morning with his load and had forgotten his delivery bills or tickets. All went well until I was nearing the village of Metfield, when Jack, the black pony I was riding, suddenly made something an excuse to take me home. We fought until he reared and backed into a ditch and I lost the reins, for he walked all over me! As you can't hurt a boy of ten, I crawled out and followed the brute, weeping. I was ashamed of myself, and all mud from head to foot. Then, suddenly, through an open gate leading into a ploughed field, I saw that rascally pony with dangling rein trotting across to a ploughing team. The ploughman stopped his horses and hid himself behind them, and as my pony came up to smell his horses he quietly stepped out and took the reins. That incident is plainly engraved on my mind. The cold, raw day; the heavy clay of the furrows; my pony—a smart, clipped-out black, a mouse colour we know so well—his ears pricked, smelling the

patient team; the wise, kind farm-hand in his weather-stained corduroys, sack on shoulders, coming out and taking charge, waiting for me to come up.

The clay on my boots weighed me down so that I was breathless and all but weeping again as I approached. The ploughman helped me to clean off those heavy masses of clinging clay, lifted me once more into the saddle and sent me off. I often wonder who that kind son of the soil was. As a horseman, his wages then would be eleven shillings a week.

My next fear as I got to the gate was whether Jack would try to take me home; but I was ready for him with my stick and fear of what my father would say if I didn't get those bills to the waggoner ahead, and I had the brute going full split before he had time to think. When I caught the waggoner some miles ahead he looked me up and down. I was covered in mud, and hated him to know I'd been off.

My mother protested in vain against me riding that pony, but my father's word was law and I had to go. Too much corn was the trouble.

Another black pony which I liked riding because he had no guile in his make-up was Hero. Many horses and inns long ago were named after Nelson. "The Norfolk Hero" also is an inn sign used in East Anglia. He was a larger pony, and I felt myself a great horseman when astride Hero, and used to hope that I looked a wonderful boy to those I met on the road. I always took a secret peep at myself in the shop windows at Harleston.

The favourite and best pony of all was a Welsh bay with small pointed ears and a white streak on her face. Her name was Fanny, and she lasted on until she was nearing thirty, and for many years pulled my mother about in her four-wheeler at a sober pace. This well suited the dogs which were part and parcel of the turnout, as it gave them time to hunt every field and fence by the roadside and catch up again and resume the gait with one hind leg carried, a familiar and inexplicable way of dog movement.

This sweet little mare lived on, so that years later when I went home for my holidays from Norwich, full of ambition to show other students at the School of Art how I could paint, I used to have her held, not allowing my mother to go out in the four-wheeler. My mother had to give in, and why not? I was shut up in a lithographic place of business all the year, with one fortnight's holiday in August, and here was my chance. After I was twenty and had left my lithographic work, I was still using the same pony as a model in pictures.



## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY DRAWINGS

FROM the days of governesses to those of school I am unable, as I recall earlier years, to place important happenings. There is only one familiar background with its leading feature, the river, for we never went farther away than Norwich, and a journey there was only a rare event. When I did go I was so frightened at the traffic that I daren't cross a street.

The years went by with the same games and doings for the various seasons. Bows and arrows in the spring, when the tall dead reeds were right for making arrows, on which we fitted elder arrow-heads, and we played marbles and had tops and whips. There certainly was an art in the making of those wonderful tops with their toe of metal—usually a shoe-maker's stud nail. I had a famous one, and thought a lot of it, and could even draw its exact pattern to-day.

But what of drawing and painting? How can I tell when I first began to draw? I do know that on Sundays we either looked through the largest scrap-album that ever was, or, when tired of that, begged father to draw. He always drew horses.

Our drawing was done on the inside of used envelopes cut open. My elder brother was always drawing, too. I remember being so jealous of a pencil copy that he had made of "A Yellow-hammer and its Nest", which I saw pinned above his bed, that I viciously rubbed it all over with a wet finger and destroyed it. I was punished for this and sent to bed.

I see myself drawing the "Jovial Huntsmen" after Caldecott, in all sorts of adventures—sometimes even at sea. I wrote underneath "Three Jovial Huntsmen Fishing", or "At Sea", or "Having Dinner". The number of these cut-open envelopes increased, and everybody—friends, the parson and all—were shown these attempts while I stood by. I shouldn't say I was proud, or bashful, or that my work depended on their judgment. For, like all children, I drew as I might have played a game, until, to make a guess, I may have been seven or eight. Then I went twice or more a week for drawing lessons at the vicarage under Miss Kate Brereton, a daughter of the parson. These

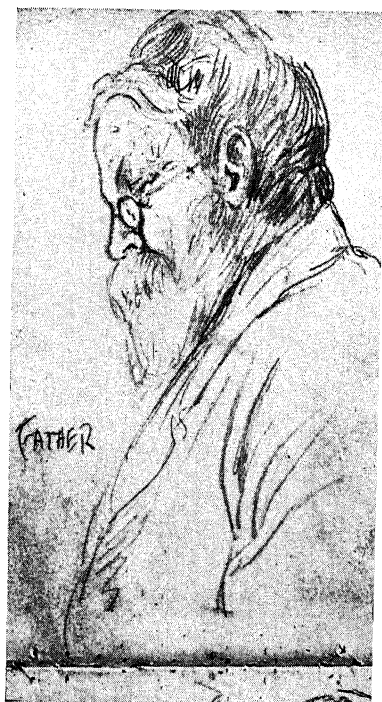
lessons opened up fresh paths. I forget when they ended; but at some time after this I began drawing the trace-horses, taken from the farmers' waggons which came with four-horse loads of wheat to the mill. They were tied to the white meadow gate in front of our house windows, while the shaft-horses pulled the waggon under the lukem platform, and the sacks of corn were unloaded, being drawn up by a bright, shining chain from the waggon.

Early waggons would sometimes arrive in front of the dining-room window as we were at family prayers. Springing up, leaving us there, maids and all kneeling against chairs, my father went through the glass door into his office for the sample of wheat bought at market. Then, through the window, we saw him put his foot on a spoke of the front wheel of the waggon, mount the shaft, open the first sack and compare the wheat with the sample. This having been done, he climbed down with the words, to the waggoner, "Alright, Cocky. You can drive on." After which he rejoined us, still on our knees, and resumed prayers where he had left off.

Often there were several waggons with grand teams of horses, their manes and tails done up with red and blue or yellow ribbons and straw plaiting. The journey to the mills with the corn was, next to harvest, the event of the year on a farm. The teams of chestnut Suffolk Punches with brass-mounted harness from Lord Huntingfield's farms were a magnificent sight. Sometime after harvest, when the wheats were threshed out, a long line of horses and waggons reached all the way up the lane and round the corner, for over a quarter of a mile. The wheat was shot into the large bins in the upper stories of the mill, until there seemed to be no space left for more—yet more went in. What beautiful flour and wheat meal we used in the house then; and what home-made brown loaves we ate, with the most perfect butter, salted exactly as it should be. I could shed a tear now at the thought of the indescribable flavour of both.

Chestnut trees stood along the south side of the lane, and horses from the foremost lot of waggons were tied underneath them. The more the waggons the longer the horses had to wait, and I remember the great amount of brass on the harness. Two men were with each waggon as a rule, the wheat, in many cases, coming long distances—fifteen or more miles. I can smell the sweet, curious scent of the horses in the lane now: a scent of pastures coming through the pores of their skin. A glorious smell, the very opposite to that of petrol.

My first sale, I believe, was a pencil drawing of a trace-horse



*My mother as a young woman, and a sketch made of Father at about sixty.*



*My mother with thirty-year-old bay pony Fanny and the dog Friday.*



*The back of Mendham Mills shown in School of Art vacation competition.*



*Photograph of Mendham Mills, showing lukem platform for unloading sacks of corn.*

belonging to a well-to-do farmer, a Mr. Sewell, who lived at Alburgh, in a pretty and well-kept house with geraniums in the flower-beds. He saw this drawing when calling one day and gave me five shillings for it. Could I ever forget that? Of course it went into my money-box.

Mr. Sewell wore a half-crowned high hat, was sallow and dark, with a trimmed beard and shaved upper lip. He had a straight, firm mouth and dark brown eyes, rather sad. He wore a light pepper-and-salt overcoat with a rose in his buttonhole, and drove a very nice horse in a very clean, low gig. My father often took me to call at his house at Alburgh, between Harleston and Bungay. I can only recall that Mrs. Sewell wore a lace cap and satiny clothes and ear-rings. She was a kind body.

But I must not forget the feature of our home—of our lives—the river. In summer and winter alike this was really our true playground, and great happenings were enacted upon its surface and upon its banks, for we had cousins and other lads to join in these doings. As we grew older, devouring the works of Fenimore Cooper and Rider Haggard, reading of pirates and bush-rangers, our adventures took us about, up and down stream. In between I revelled in drawings of Indians on mustangs, trappers and scalp-hunters. One large coloured pencil drawing was of Indians attacking a fort, the air being filled with flying tomahawks and arrows.

What really made these days was our gradual mastery of an old two-ended, flat-bottomed boat which was used for getting weeds from the river after the summer cutting. Our imaginations turned this old boat into a wonderful craft. We not only made a mast and sail; we put heavy flint stones in the boat for ballast, and to do this stripped a rockery on which blue periwinkle grew. And there was trouble with those rockery stones! Imagine us in a strong March gale, with bending mast, stayed by a taut, stolen linen line, with straining, bulging sail, roaring down the long reach of river, leaving a wake on either side like that of a steam launch. The wake as it followed fast lapped over each bank. We sped onwards to the end, which was the overhanging bough of a great tree at the bottom of the orchard. The crash was frightful as mast and sail fell, while we were thrown on our backs by the impact.

How often each one of us fell in the river and escaped drowning I cannot say, but such adventures were rewarded with a thrashing. Then we were sent to bed, no longer skull-and-crossbone pirates, but mere misunderstood, unhappy boys. But who can beat the spirit of youth? Or even begin to understand it in all its phases?

What didn't we do on that peaceful river? When shoals of cut water-weed lay against "the rack", as we called it, which stretched across from bank to bank above the weir and kept all floating weed from going down to the mill, we fished for perch from that old boat, gazing down into the dark amber depths as the worm swung in the current below. We fished for roach and dace, we found moorhens' nests with their eggs, and in the reeds, small nests of reed warblers. Their continual song was a background to our frolics and adventures.

Moods for outdoor games and adventures came with the seasons. Ice, snow and floods forgotten; spring in the air; marsh dykes alive with spawning frogs; marsh marigolds along the river bank; pale, dead reeds bright in the sun—reeds for arrows!

Choosing the straightest and strongest of these—strong as walking-sticks—and putting a piece of sharpened elder on the end, we made them into arrows.

On our way to school, the steep, clay sides of a hill, grown with thickets of ground elm, was our place for selecting and cutting bow-sticks. During the weeks before Easter we became expert makers of bows and arrows which were no mere toys. The serious craft we practised was handed down from boys of the past. A good bow shot a big distance, and what exercise and excitement were ours as we stalked the yards, measuring the shot across the meadows, with, in our mind, the exact spot on the clay hillside where the particular elm-stick had been cut for the bow.

Through March weather there was kite-making and kite-flying, an outdoor game as old as the rest. To have the strongest, lightest, and biggest kite was the aim of every boy who flew one. Our kite-making became a nuisance. Paste had to be made in the kitchen, goose-wings for putting on the paste were taken, newspapers and scissors were taken, an empty room at the top of the house was taken, where large scientific kites were designed and made with paper and paste, under the guidance of a mill-hand who knew all about the length of tails and balance. Rearring and straining in the wind, a large kite would at last be sent off, the string paid out faster and faster; the kite unsteady, making fantastic dives in the air. The mill-hand would say, "Wants more tail". At last the kite was balanced, and soon we were watching it, a speck of light in the sun, far up against dark clouds, taking more and more balls of string, until we could beg no more money to get it at the village shop, or if we had the money, the string ran out.

The days come back to me. The nursing of a kite up and up

in a lighter wind. The frantic haste in paying out the string as it soared in a stronger breeze, we gazing at it reaching "height above unknown height".

On the meadows men with horses harrowing and rolling, moving slowly across and back; making wide, velvety tracks on the sunlit grass, as the custom had been on all Good Fridays ever since I could remember.

Whitsuntide followed, with the willows in fresh, new green; and we made our yearly walk to South Elmham Priory. Fences and thorn-trees white with May blossom. The marshes, as far as you could see, one blaze of buttercups; and daisies, as well as buttercups, covered the home pastures. There were horse shows in small towns, where flags festooned the streets. A large flag flew from the church tower as the bells rang out all the afternoon, their sound mingling with the neighing of mares and foals in the show-ground. Tents with lunch or tea and a strong, sweet scent of trodden grass, while a band played waltzes and old tunes, instead of an amplifying van with records.

Hay-making time came round too quickly. All hands were called in for this, for my father made good hay. There were the rows made by the drag-rake, the cocks, the carting, the creaking of the waggons, and the making of large stacks in the stackyard. Tall poles stood at each end of the stack-in-making, so that at night the stack-cloth was stretched across. The cleared hayfields still scented the air as we played cricket on the pitch now open to us.

Later, I remember, there was in the old, tarred boathouse above the mill a new, varnished boat from Beccles. It was a good stiff boat, with plenty of room in the stern. My mother's great joy was a picnic, and as we now had one boat above the mill and one below, we could go either up or down the river to the scene of our spread. If I were in the bows, I trailed my fingers in the tepid, soft water, plucking up the yellow lilies from their stubborn hold, looking down into the clear current with waving weeds below. Homewards again, with cattle standing above on the meadow, their reflections showing below the line of water-moss bordering banks grown with forget-me-nots and scented with meadowsweet. The clatter of oars at the finish, the getting out tea-things and baskets, the chaining-up of the boat and the lap of water in the boathouse as the last one steps ashore. All these memories of the river crowd thickly in my mind.

Opposite the boathouse the kitchen garden bordered the clear-running millstream. Close to the path stood an old apple-tree

which came into all our doings, and was called the Doctor Harvey tree. On warm days scents came from raspberries and a still richer aroma from black currants hanging in dark clusters where startled blackbirds flew away with a full-throated cluck! cluck!—the same yesterday, to-day and always. Down the stream by the mill were wooden steps, with a handrail to the water's edge, where men filled buckets of water for the horses in the stables. The sound of the mill was the background to our dreams.

An old chorus song which came long before "After the Ball", and was sung with sentiment and feeling, runs in my head now: "The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill":

Beneath it the stream gently ripples;  
Around it the birds love to trill.  
And though now far away,  
Still my thoughts fondly stray  
To the old rustic bridge by the mill.

Hot days in July and August, and bathing. Learning to swim on bundles of bulrushes. I recapture the smell of the river as we revelled about in our depth where there was a gravel bottom. Our diving grew wonderful in deeper water. Fast-running dives we took, and if any watcher were there, how we loved showing off! We swam long distances underwater; we made great jumps from the bank far out into the river; and when it was over, we lay sunning ourselves, then dressed and went to tea in the arbour under the weeping ash in the garden. For tea we had small, brown loaves, sometimes a new ham, eggs, jam, beautiful butter, buns and cake, all home-made, the work of our good mother. When everything had disappeared, more took their place next day.

I give here an extract taken from a diary written later by my mother on Sundays over a period of a few years:

"I have been reading Longfellow's verses—'The Rainy Day'—it is typical of my feelings. At times the loneliness and sense of loss overcome me, and I think—What use is Life? But no doubt there is still something left for me to do. The daffodils are in full bloom; as I stand near dear little Joe's grave beneath the ash trees, I live over again the happy times we passed in their shade, the summer tea-parties, when I lay there so many days on my sofa. In the years to come, when Mendham is only a memory, I know they will all look back to the happy summer afternoons and talk about them, perhaps, when I am in my grave. Writing of graves reminds me, that before church this morning, I sat on the wall by the old floodgates, and made a wreath of daffodils and ivy which I placed on my mother's grave when I went to church. The service was not, to my mind, refreshing or peaceful."



And here she is, in rather a more optimistic mood for Sunday :

“ A beautiful south wind, bright sunshine ; we are spending Easter alone. I love the rest and quiet and leisure to stroll about with no duties calling me indoors. The cows are doing well. I had a brood of chickens off this morning and watched them basking in the sunshine. After breakfast, I wandered across the north meadow and leaned over the rails at the ford—musing on the past and all the happy holidays I made for my children ; the big bakings, the merry tea table round which they all assembled on Christmas Eve.”

There were tea-parties on the lawn with aunts, nice girl cousins and friends. Sometimes an Australian cousin from Cambridge, with a tenor voice, came to stay with us ; and he brought with him once for a vacation the great Figgis, winner of the Lightfoot scholarship, and afterwards a famous historian. He it was who gave me Longfellow's “ Hiawatha ” and other books of poems to read, so starting me off with a love of poetry which has given me great happiness ever since. Inspired by Longfellow I did a water-colour of a sunset sky reflected on the floods and wrote underneath :

Can it be the sun descending  
O'er the plain of level water ?  
Or the Red Swan floating, flying,  
Wounded by the magic arrow, etc. etc.

I gave it as a birthday present to my mother, who used to read “ Hiawatha ” aloud to us, which infected us with sweet melancholy.

If ever a man was a hero, our cousin Stanley from St. Catherine's College was one. He expounded “ Hiawatha ”. I hear him now reciting the lines :

And the rushing of great rivers  
Through their palisades of pine trees.

He wandered far across the marsh with a gun, always hoping to shoot a heron. He declared to us that when at last he did hit one, he saw it turn round and pick the shots out of its behind. There was not a marsh dyke he couldn't clear, and we followed—often with a splash.

Let me keep yet awhile to the seasons of my youth ; the autumn days, of which Longfellow wrote. The elms and the maples along the hedgerows changing to bright yellow. Rich, dark ploughlands with yellow leaves scattered over the headlands where plough teams came and turned, the ploughman at the handle with line and guiding voice, “ Come here, whoa ; get on, Diamond ”.

Let me picture afresh the floods when the marsh up and

down the river was one vast, desolate sheet of water, studded with island gateways and rows of pollard willows with their inverted reflections. An alder or poplar here and there traced the course of the yellow flow of the stream as it grew swifter and stronger, like a broad moving floor nearing the weir, and, farther on, the floodgates. White spume-flakes hurried by and disappeared down the yellow slide of weed-smelling waters of the weir, roaring in turbulent masses of foam and, racing on, carving out great slices from banks, pouring through the orchard and by pig-sties, meeting the other maelstrom from the floodgates, where eel-nets, taut and stretched, were submerged in the weight of the flow.

The floods were a great adventure while they lasted. How sure was I that I could paint all this sky and water! What pictures I set out to do! Alas! when I tried, the wide stretches of flood would look like snow.

There are yet the frosts and snow to tell of, which were often the cause of floods and which lasted for weeks and weeks together. Lanes drifted up level, and there were snow-ploughs with horses and men who were given hot, mulled beer to drink. Then a thaw, followed by floods and more frosts and hosts of folk all skating. Some skating and pushing others on chairs; some cutting figures on the ice; skating all hours of the day and in the moonlight. Sharp, hard, sparkling frosts, and a church cold in spite of stoves on a Sunday.

In the mornings, our towels, like Mr. Jorrocks's, were frozen stiff, and the water in the ewer was a block of ice. As we lay in bed we heard the bang of cracking ice on the river, and hated getting up and going to school.

During these passing years we three brothers had, one by one, left the wings of a governess and walked daily to a grammar school, two miles away, at Redenhall.

We liked the walk, carrying our satchels; loitering if early, hurrying if late. We liked that school with its head master, Christopher C. Hall. He made history interesting to us. He encouraged me to draw. We had football and cricket, and a drill sergeant, a bathing-pool and lessons in swimming, at which I won a prize for swimming in the best style. We had canings and Speech Days and we were happy. We even liked the French verbs.

In these days of school and home lessons we nevertheless had evenings of reading during the winter. If it were Scott, my mother was chief reader, one of us occasionally taking a turn, the rest listening to the adventures of *Ivanhoe* and *Front de Breuf*,

and Sir Brian de Bois Gilbert. We pictured the storming of Torquilstone, seeing Framlingham Castle in our minds. We saw forest glades of oak, and deer sheltering in the bracken.

When we drove to Norwich—a long journey—our mother always went to a bookshop for Scott's novels. One in particular she determined to find—*Count Robert of Paris*. We went through *The Monastery* and *The Abbot* and *Rob Roy* one after the other to the last word.

The truest heroine of romance, that I loved best of all, was Diana Vernon in *Rob Roy*. It was the period I wished to read about. She wore a gold-laced, three-cornered hat, and when, many years later, I was staying at Chantilly with Baron Robert de Rothschild and saw some of the French hunting-women wearing the same sort of hat, my mind at once went far back to the days when I used to picture Diana Vernon on her horse in *Rob Roy*. A glow on her cheek, a light in her eye, her brown hair clubbed and tied behind with a broad black ribbon.

Then came *The Woman in White*, and *The Moonstone*—two thrillers; and once when my elder brother was reading, or stumbling along through an intense period in the former, my father, who was a good reader, snatched the book from him and went on himself, trembling with impatience and wrath at the incompetence of his son.

The famous old book, *Frank Fairleigh*, should not be left out. I have not forgotten it, and never shall, for we lived through all those adventures in many happy hours of reading. Yet another was *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which for some reason—it may have been later days—we read to ourselves.

It would be impossible to say which book made the evenings at home in that lamplit room the most alluring. Shall I say *Pickwick*? My father read it to us, and no one else, for he certainly could read Dickens, and he was practised through having in his younger days been in great demand at popular, penny readings held in country districts long ago.

Before beginning to read, he always polished his spectacles with a large, coloured silk handkerchief. With his silvery hair, his left hand usually supporting his forehead, as he turned the leaves of the book with his right, he was a picture, sitting at the table, the shaded lamp throwing its light over him and upon the book and part of the green tablecloth. To increase the light on the page, a pair of upright candlesticks stood on either side of him.

My mother, wearing a lace cap, sat by the table sharing the light; always sewing or mending, while we sat round the fire, or lay on the hearthrug with the dogs.

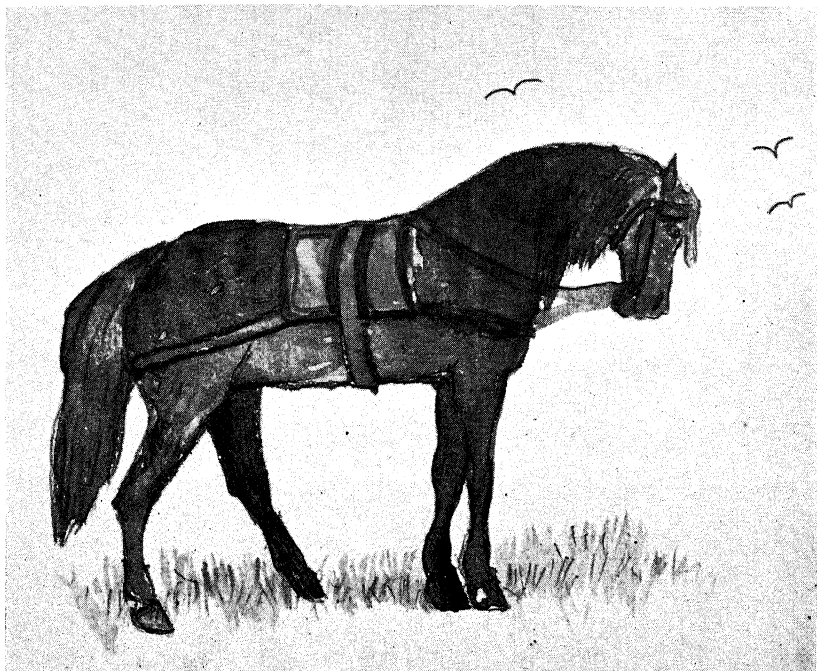
“ ‘Sam,’ said Mr. Pickwick; ‘Sir,’ said Mr. Weller,” my father would read, holding back his bottled-up enjoyment of what he knew was coming, and as he read on, before he could get through Mr. Weller’s following remark, tears of laughter would be dimming his sight. The spectacles would be pushed up to his forehead and yet again he had to wipe his eyes with the silk handkerchief and again polish the spectacles. Mr. Pickwick lived supreme then, even as he does now, although I admit to having read *Mr. Sponge’s Sporting Tour* more often.

My father’s reading of Dickens was at its best when he gave us the story of the bagman’s uncle with the vixenish bay mare in the clay-coloured gig with the red wheels. To hear him doing this was a thing to remember—a youthful experience which, with the lamplit scene in the room, will never fade or grow indistinct so long as I retain one grain of memory.

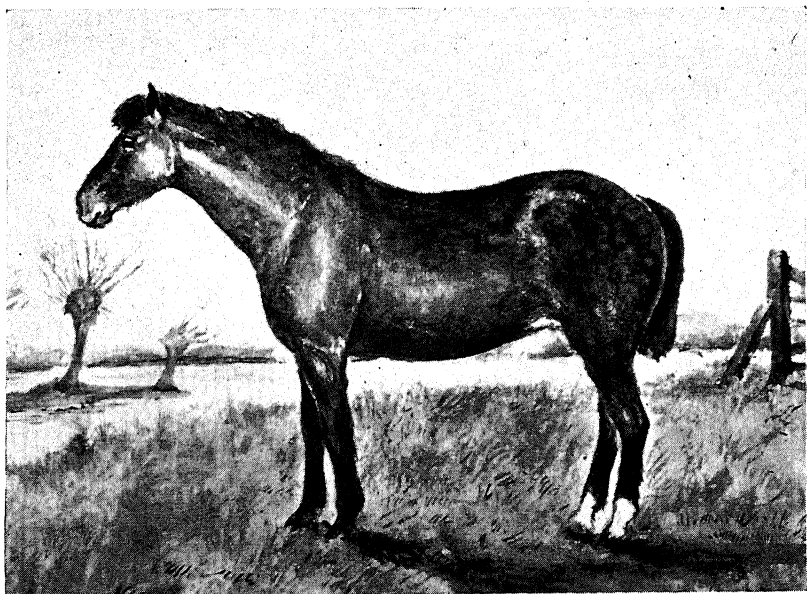
What boys could ever be leading dull lives with a good story going on each night interwoven with their work and play? A good book makes life a joy. To-day I like reading best of all when, with the pillows well piled behind me at the head of the bed, and then with the reading-lamp at exactly the right angle, I lie in contented concentration of mind, enjoying sentences, descriptions, dialogues. I am reading *Ask Mamma* now, by Surtees, and am the happier for knowing that Sir Moses Mainchance and Billy Pringle are upstairs waiting for me to-night.

But to my story. How many there are who did not in early days fully appreciate and understand a well-meaning father. Ours was a character, and in many ways he was misunderstood. I never made a friend of him until later in life, and then, alas! too late; and now, when I look back on those days, I see all that we missed, and all that might have been, had he taken us more into his confidence. Yet how kind and indulgent he was, in spite of the collects we had to learn, and the tasks he set us in the holidays; in spite of having to sit through the long, dull services, hearing him reading from the Book of Kings, or Revelation, or about Jehu, or Ahab and horses and chariots. One Sunday, at the mid-day meal called dinner, not lunch—cold sirloin and horse radish, tart and cream—my mother said, “John, I wish you would not work yourself up so, as you did in the lesson when you came to the Agony in the Garden”. “Ellen,” said my father, “I wish you would mind your own business!”

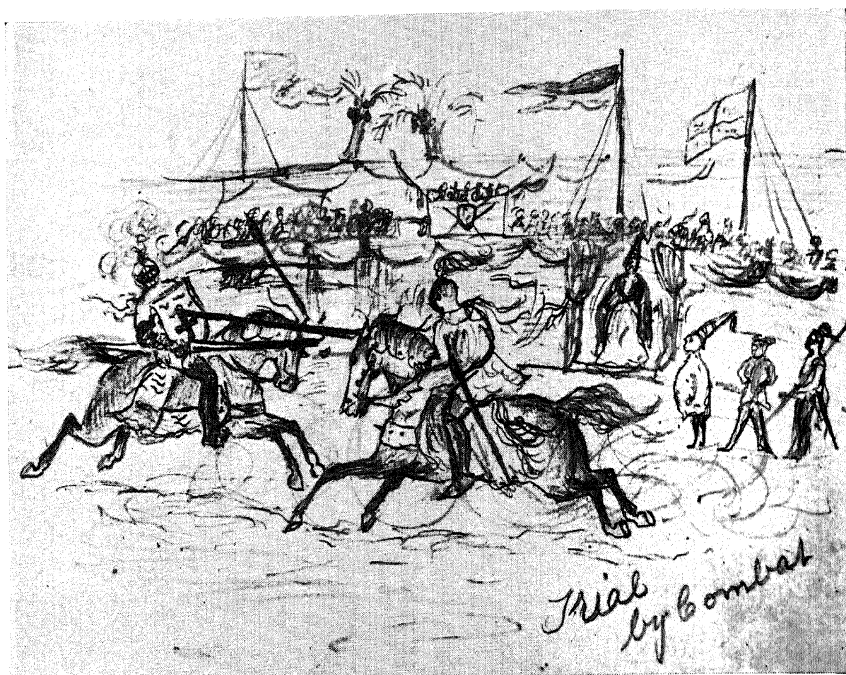
A troublesome thought comes to me often. How old was our father when we were very young and he used to come home cheerful; when he had driving accidents; when our mother



*"When my father came to see us on my fourth birthday, bringing with him a beautiful toy horse . . . being full of Caldecott, I called it Merrylegs." Merrylegs was kept with loving care and was my first model. This is a drawing done two years later and preserved by a fond mother. See page 15.*



*Early water-colour of my mother's pony Fanny, done at the age of nine.*

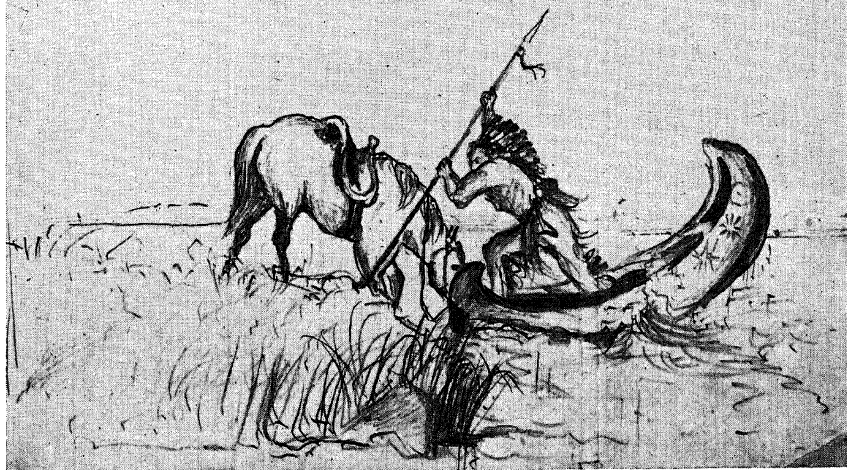


*Trial by Combat. Inspired by the tournament at Ashby-de-la-Zouche in Ivanhoe.*

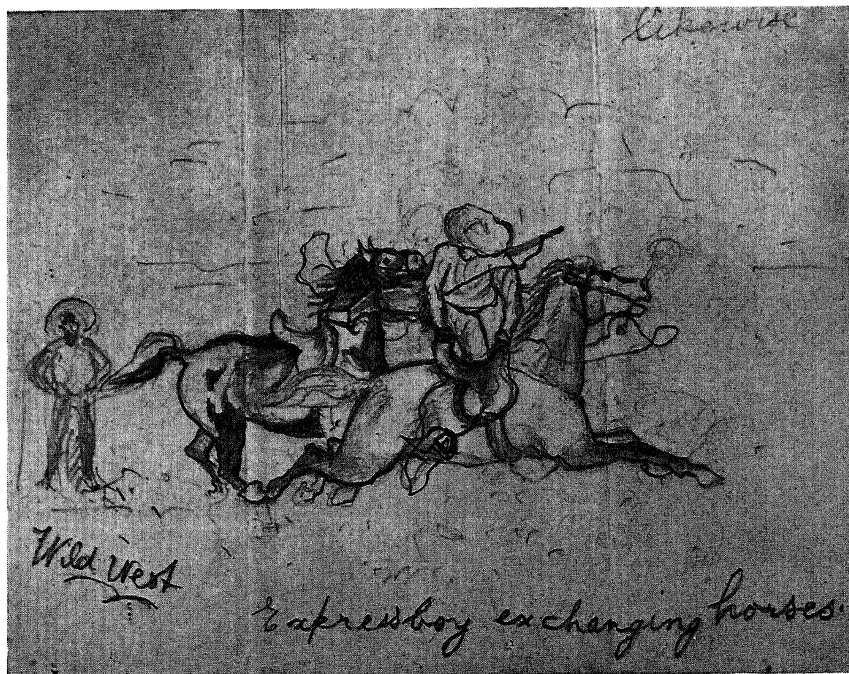


*Knights Templar coming to the rescue. Standard-bearer engaged.  
Drawings sent home from school in letters.*

The last of his tribe pursued"  
 "Come my brave steed & follow me"



"Come, my brave steed, and follow me. I revelled in drawings of Indians on mustangs, trappers and scalp-hunters." See page 33.



Express boy exchanging horses. A sketch inspired by Wild West stories. See page 33.  
 Drawings sent home from school in letters.





Left: *Myself as a boy.* Right: *Early sketch of my father one Sunday morning on the Mill Bridge.*



Left: *Jack Cooke, a famous Norfolk character, Master of Norwich Staghounds.*

Above: *Head of my brown mare which I bought from Dick Bullard. This shows how foolish was the fashion of cutting off a horse's mane and forelock.*



upbraided him, and the resigned, righteous, sorrowful expression came over that live face?

"You've been drinking, John," she would say. But why shouldn't he drink? People in Dickens' books got cheerful with friends, and this is what he used to do. He was what we call a good mixer, and got on with everybody—except Gladstone, whom he had never met.

I am recalling a weapon, a six-chambered revolver. Like a guard on a coach with a blunderbuss, my father always took the revolver with him on long journeys, when nights were dark, to and from markets like Diss, Framlingham, Halesworth. This was when we were little boys, when he mostly drove in the tall, red-wheeled sulky, until my mother persuaded him to resign it to the foreman or salesman because she said he wasn't safe in it.

The revolver was thought nothing more of than a cup of tea or a walking-stick. It always lay on the mantelpiece in the office, on the right of the centre-piece—a thing like a clock showing the days, the week and month.

Let me now use my imagination, seeing my father from my own grown-up point of view—I am almost as old as he was when he died. A live genius of a man who read *The Pilgrim's Progress* to us; who had a bookcase full of books—Josephus; shelves full of *Good Words*, bound in black leather with gilded backs, containing all those early drawings by Millais illustrating the parables, of the Prodigal Son and the rest. The Comedies, Histories, Tragedies of Shakespeare, which I possess to-day, also bound in black leather with gilt. Tupper's *Philosophy* in two volumes, which I dipped into, and found the lines which I wrote in an early love-letter—"When love of the heart is blighted, it buddeth not again. When once that old, sweet song is forgotten, it is to be learned no more. How often will youth look back and weep over early affections."

Since living here at Dedham I have thought out his career almost from a lad. His father died at Scotland Place Farm, Stoke-by-Nayland, leaving his mother with a family of ten. To write of what I know of their history would be superfluous. Yet whenever I ride to-day through Stoke-by-Nayland, down the hill from where Constable painted the church, I pass a pleasant house, the home of my Aunt Hale or Hannah, one of my father's married sisters, and who, as a widow, came later to Mendham, and lived in those distant days not far from our home, with Grandma Munnings, our father's mother.

I am only now waking up to the fact that our father had a mother, a beautiful old lady in wide, spreading silk skirts. I

remember the day of her funeral—the scene at the grave; my father standing there, smitten with grief and regrets; tears rolling down his cheeks. In a spate of words about painting I have forgotten these sad happenings. He stood there by the grave and wept. What did we children know of his feelings? His mother was wonderful. Confound all the people who lose albums of photographs—and all modern wars, when family treasures are lost.

But I must get back to my father and the revolver he carried with him in the sulky on the long, dark journeys home from market, with leather bags full of sovereigns and silver amounting to three, four, five hundred pounds.

He used to tell us of a night when two men stopped him, one seizing the bridle of the horse, and how he fired the revolver into the air, and how the frightened horse leaped forward, knocking the man down, the wheel bouncing over him as my father galloped away.

This weapon, as I said, used to lie on the office mantelpiece. The years sped. We grew to school age, to youth, to young men. It still lay there, no longer used. Victorian highwaymen were gone. My youngest brother was grown up and in love. Impulsive, like all of us and many more, he was a fast lad. He found at last a fond soul and became engaged. No ordinary girl could ever cope with such a tornado as Charles. I remember so well staying at home. His girl was there, too. I painted her in a hammock, under the old weeping ash-tree. Some months later there was a row between Charles and his girl. She turned him down. He came home in a state of "going to the devil". I write this from my mother's story. He swore he would shoot himself with the revolver.

My mother hurried to the office, took the revolver, and went out to the yard at the back of the house, through doors by the knife-house, as it was called—where old Billy Manning on crutches used to sit and clean the knives and give us a piece of his fat bacon when we were children. But to the story of the revolver. My mother, going through the doors to the back premises, where faggots for firing were stacked by the river, went to the edge of the tail-hole and threw the revolver into the middle, where it was eighteen feet deep.

The following week-end I was at home. On Sunday morning my peaceful-minded, ageing father came into the house from the office.

"Where is the revolver?" he asked.

"I threw it in the river," said my mother.

Then, with an expression of utter resignation on his sorrowful countenance, my father said :

“ Well, I suppose I shall have to dive for it.”

Poor father and his *Pilgrim's Progress* and the big family Bible with steel engravings, from John Martin's pictures, of the fall of Babylon and the plagues of Egypt, which we looked at on Sunday evenings. His large, black, leather-bound volumes of Shakespeare, with portraits of actors and actresses of the day: Macready, Phelps, Miss Glynn and the rest. I picture him in his early days at Shonks Mill, Ongar. And later at Nayland, when he played chess and read at Penny Readings, and got all those *Good Words* and other books bound in leather at Colchester.

I remember him telling us how Aunt Hannah's husband, who died, was the son of Warren Hale, Lord Mayor of London in 1864. He told us of his invitation to the Lord Mayor's Feast, as it was then called; how he attended the market in Mark Lane every week, long, long ago.

We knew nothing of him, his life, his brothers and sisters, his beginnings, his thoughts. And my mother, full of organ-playing, music, poetry, of Scott, Thackeray and Dickens, and a hundred sunsets over the river, red polls and their pedigrees,—she knew very little more.

“ And how's the good lady? ” he used to say to a superior sort of farmer with a cellar.

“ Quite middlin', my dear sir, quite middlin', ” was the reply.

CHAPTER V  
COUSIN STANLEY'S YACHT

I AM writing this on a hot day in August 1944. The Americans are now as far as Rennes and Dinan, while I sit here, in Withypool, at the bottom end of a small lawn in the shade of a chestnut tree. The shadow is moving round as I write, and spots of light tremble on the paper. The Americans, with their heavy guns and tanks, were about here on Exmoor for months. The sound of their gunfire had become familiar. Suddenly they were gone, and now the harsh sound of their travelling tanks is transferred to Brittany. All is quiet here, and the sound I hear now is the twittering of young sparrows and the faintest possible stir of leaves or the hum of bees.

Groping yet to youthful days, such an afternoon as this comes to my mind—the heat, the sluggish river, the flat water-lily leaves which are pushed aside as we launch my green-painted yacht.

My cousin Stanley from Cambridge had made this yacht to show what could be done. He and I had gone to Mr. Fairhead's carpenter's shop, and there he had chosen a large block of deal and placed it in the wooden clamp. In wonder I watched him draw the plan of the boat on the top side of the blocks, saw how, with a mallet and gouge, he hollowed out the shape, and then, turning it over and again fixing it, and using spokeshave, chisel and sandpaper, he gradually and surely made a most beautiful hollowed-out hull, two feet long. This took time to finish and deck over. At the blacksmith's he cast a lead keel—for he was a workman—which was fixed. Then this hull was placed in a stand, and in time fitted with mast and sails, hemmed and stitched by my mother. The yacht was called *Minnehaha*, Hiawatha's heroine.

And now, although in Exmoor, with the rounded, mauve-grey outline of the great hill opposite me, I find ourselves again as we were, pushing aside the water-lily leaves with the bows of the yacht; sending her on her way. I can smell the river now and see the boat heeling to the slight breeze, gathering way, with sails and tiller set by my clever cousin, so that she sped on across to my brother on the far side. He, with a light pole, had only to turn her round as she arrived and let her sail back to us. This *Minnehaha* has long disappeared, but then it was all I thought of for weeks.

The making of it revolutionised all my attempts at making boats. Till then, mine were heavy, solid, lifeless things copied from bought ships which came home with us from trips to Southwold and Lowestoft. Now the secret was mine, and I made other models from scales out of a book. My last, stripped and dismasted, still remains with me to bring back those days of white sails gliding across a sunlit river—myself standing there or following in the boat, watching how the model sailed and stood up to the breeze or sailed into the wind, as I wanted it to. This yacht, about twenty-eight inches overall, and made from scaled designs of a once-famous *Corsair*, was a good sailing-boat. I painted her pale blue, and now she rests at home in a cupboard. Her name is carefully written on the bows, for I finished her in my Norwich lodgings when I was beginning to learn all about lettering in the lithographic trade.

This name dated my last boyish effort and brings, too, many queer memories of dreams long dead, of songs and choruses, of a boy growing into youth, already beginning to work in a grown-up world for his living. The name of my blue yacht was *One Little Girl in Blue*—taken from a song of yore which was all the rage in the halls and which everyone sang, “Two Little Girls in Blue”. Part of a verse in this popular ditty went thus:

One little girl in blue, lad,  
Won your father's heart,  
Became your mother,  
I married the other,  
But now we have drifted apart!

Since then, when at Harwich Regatta early in the season, out in the wide harbour mouth in a launch, a stiff breeze going and fast-moving clouds overhead, I, as a grown-up, have seen yachts of the large racing class—the *Endeavour*, the *Shamrock*, the *Velsheda* and the rest of them: I have watched them drawing nearer, at a great pace under a cloud of canvas, and passing so close that the booms would be almost above one's head, leaving a great wash which almost upset the launch. It gave me a thrill each time I saw it happening on the wide stretches of dun-coloured, breezy waters of the North Sea under cloud-shadow and sunlight—those tall, sloping triangles of sails shining white against heavy skies, or towering dark grey against a lighter sky as they raced through shadowed spaces of sea.

In the days before my Norwich life began I was taken to Lowestoft with Arthur Baldry, the son of one of the mill-hands old Sam Baldry. He had been in the crew of a famous racing yacht of that day, the *Corsair*, owned, I believe, by a Mr. Popham.

This friendly man, who wore a sailor's cap, blue jersey and black trousers, and who had great, powerful, brown hands and wrists, with tattoo-marks on his arms, took me with him to stay on a large steam yacht called the *Blencathra*, which was lying in the basin by the pier at Lowestoft. There was no one on board but Baldry, another man and some Esquimo sledge-dogs which had been with the ship on an Arctic cruise. It was an immense experience for a boy just in his teens. Being Easter, the weather was bitterly cold, with east winds. A large vessel like this, with warm, comfortable cabins and bunks at night, was an entirely new world for a boy who had never dreamt of such surroundings, such smells of salt water and tar, such humming of wind through the rigging, of other boats all around. Our breakfasts were always smoked haddock—not ordinary haddock, but the best, and most delicious ever tasted: cooked in milk and butter in a pan over the galley-stove by Arthur, and eaten with thick crusty bread and butter. Such a lot of butter, and no domestic economy, or sparing of it. Those lovely Esquimo dogs, with their tails curled over their backs, were part of the ship, and always about the deck.

Every later visit to Lowestoft in grown-up life brings back my stay on the *Blencathra*, and I call to mind how full of sea knowledge I was, and how superior when I arrived home again.

There had been earlier visits than that to Lowestoft, when we used to sit on the sands and see our mother bathe from a machine with tall red wheels, one of a row of huge, painted vehicles, which must have dated with those drawings by John Leech in *Plain or Ringlets*. We rode on donkeys from the Neptune statue at one end of the parade to the other and back again. These sea-side days were few and far between—yet not too far off to recall. The fish market comes, bringing its smells mingled with brine. Closely packed rows of smacks with brown sails, brown cordage, brown nets and orange-coloured masts crowded the quays.

As the years went on our visits grew full of interest. To stand on the end of that old pier and watch the brown-sailed smacks going out was a sight which no one will see again. The smell of the sea; the cry of gulls; the comfortable, curved, boarded seating running along each side of the pier, the broad width of strong boarded floor beneath our feet in sand-shoes, was all a delight. We never seemed to regret these things on our homeward journey, as I should now, could I but go there.

Then, as I grew old and in my twenties, I not only looked at fishing-smacks, and yachts lying in the basin, I also looked at pretty girls in summer dresses, walking up and down the pier on

summer evenings, and flirted and walked with them. I stayed in luxury at the old Harbour Hotel, and ate great breakfasts of the sweetest, freshest dabs that ever were fried.

What bliss! and I was free, making my living and able to work or play. A year is a long period of time, and yet all too short. So much can be done or attempted in a year if we didn't play too much. Looking into those years, I find I played a lot—too much.



## CHAPTER VI

### FRAMLINGHAM COLLEGE

“**N**OW, here’s something to copy,” said the side-whiskered grammar-school master, in mortar-board and black gown. “When you draw, Alfred, hold your pencil lightly—so lightly that if I flip it from your hand it will not mark the paper. There you are!” as he flipped it away with the third finger and thumb. He then gave me what I was to copy: a donkey’s head or a classic face.

“You think you can draw, you young fool, but you’re no damn’d good,” snarled a big bully, twisting my ear in his mutton fist.

When he had nearly wrung it out of my skull he sent me flying. There was no revenge. Life was harder then. Cold rooms, cold feet, cold walks to school.

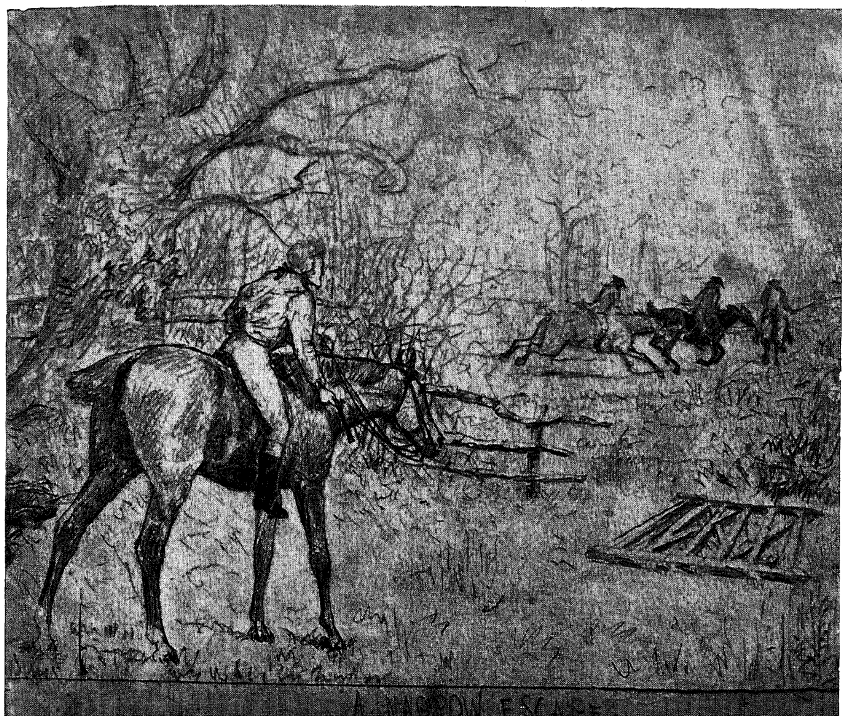
Drawing for no reason—in blissful ignorance—without intent or aim, and not a care in a world of dreams, excepting home lessons. I was in a dream when I modelled a bear in clay and kept it moist under a broad leaf by the river bank. A small boy’s soul went into that piece of work, which never stopped in his sleep.

My larger horse masterpieces up to then had been on a white-washed wall of the garden house, or privy, but one day I stretched what seemed to me a vast sheet of cartridge paper on the table-top in the old nursery, and there I set out in pencil and water-colours a picture of a prairie fire. There were Indians with painted faces and feathers; some on mustangs, some on foot; trappers; bison in herds; wolves or prairie dogs, and every conceivable creature that I had read of, all tearing towards you out of the picture from a vast horizon of red and yellow flames.

This attempt was finally pasted on the wall over the mantelpiece in our old nursery, which, as I have already told, had its walls covered from ceiling to floor with pictures from the old *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*.

My mother went to live at Mundesley after my father died, and our old home was taken over by my brother and his wife, and the place was done up. Like the other rooms, the walls of the old nursery were stripped. The Randolph Caldecott pictures, the

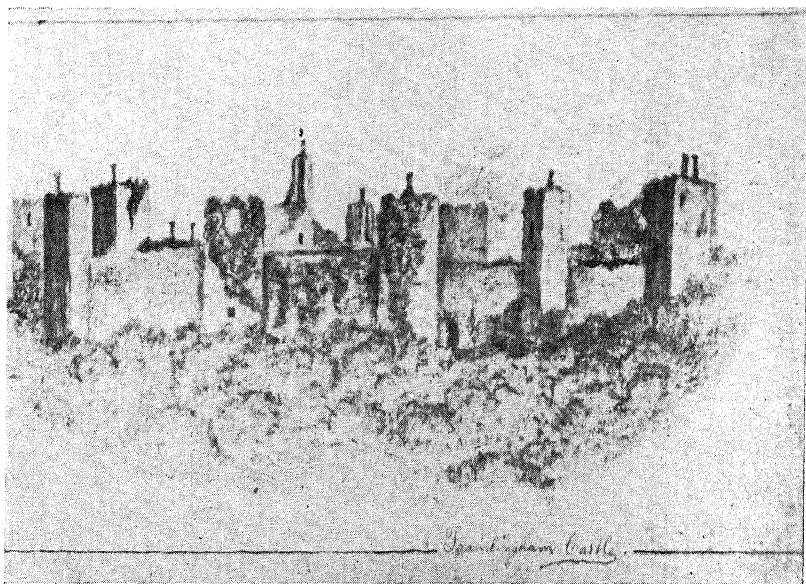




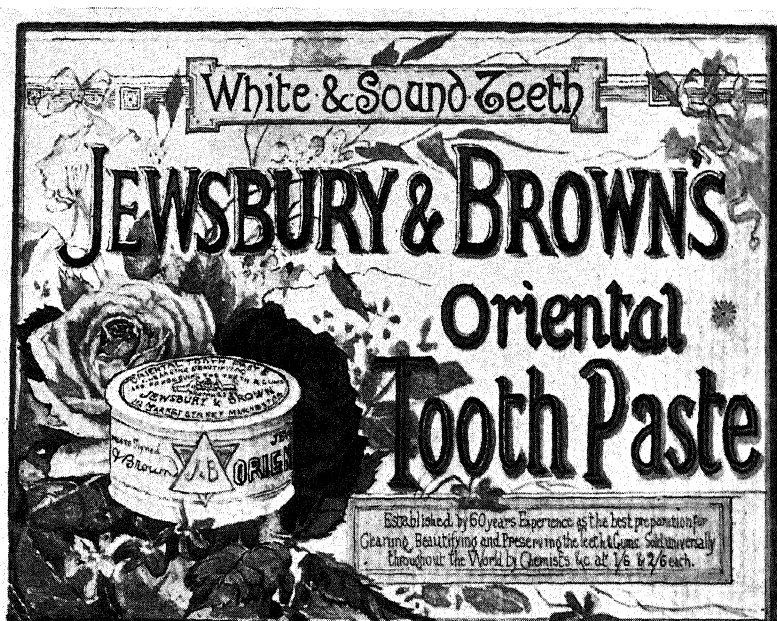
*"My one, overpowering ambition was to make pictures of highwaymen." See page 49.*



*"...marking an imagined pictures of conspirators in dark avenues."—Conspiracy.*



"We pictured the storming of Torquilstone, seeing Framlingham Castle in our minds."  
*See page 39.*



*Jewsbury and Brown toothpaste trial copy (lithography).*

coloured plates from the *Graphic* Christmas numbers going back for years, and one I loved, called "The Haunted Room", and my prairie-fire picture, all destroyed and gone. The walls had taken years to cover, one picture overlapping the other until no wallpaper could be seen, and now nothing was left; not even the *Graphic* full page of the moon rising in the Sudan, with camels on the march throwing long shadows. I had meant to see them all again and get back to boyhood, but it was not to be. This was one of the greater of my lesser griefs.

My one, overpowering ambition was to make pictures of highwaymen, and from early years to my late teens I made many attempts to illustrate a scene of highway robbery. I still have one attempt in pencil. As the years went on, I clung to this idea, until later on it blossomed out into a large black-and-white wash drawing which I exhibited in a black-and-white exhibition of the Norwich Art Circle, under the title "The Simple Plan—that they shall take who have the power, and they shall keep who can". I had studied books of costume and old prints in order to be correct, and a masked highwayman, in cocked hat and caped coat, with levelled pistol, in the foreground, had stopped the approaching post-chaise. The postilion, on a rearing near-grey leader, had the true scared look, and the wheeler postilion appeared even more horrified.

My next, and last, school was Framlingham College, the county school of Suffolk. Here, in spite of canings and many unhappy days, I used to draw and paint more and more, under the tuition of a master nicknamed Bug Lynch, a peaceful, fat, curly-headed, middle-aged bachelor.

The large, ugly Albert Memorial College stood on one hill, and the old Castle of Framlingham on another, with a small valley between. I always imagined this as Torquilstone Castle in *Ivanhoe*, and made many pictures of it from the steps of the statue of the Prince Consort. What hateful lessons in Euclid and algebra went on there! Only Raven, the history master, made our work with him interesting. He read us pages out of Macaulay and Froude.

The lower fourth, where I ended up, was full of trainers' sons from Newmarket. Frank Butters was one, and it is difficult to connect that fat boy with the now grey-top-hatted man I often see in the Epsom paddock, saddling famous horses, such as Mahmoud, holder of the record time for the Derby, and Bahram, winner of the Triple Crown—Two Thousand, Derby and Leger—and a host of others.

A burning resentment is always with me when I look back to a

night in Preparation at Framlingham. I was drawing something or other. Suddenly the master spoke. "Will Munnings come here to me and bring with him what he is drawing?" He looked at it, and without a change of expression said, "Come round to my room before Chapel." There in his room did I bend over a chair, receiving, in spite of all my "Please sirs", six vicious cuts with his cane, all on the same spot. How I sat in Chapel I can't tell. This was villainous treatment for what I had done.

Again, a friend, Scott, and I had started a scheme of painting each morning before breakfast in the Music Room. One day we rushed up the corridor a minute late for breakfast in the large hall. The under-Head or next in command was a cross-grained fellow, and for this slip he ordered us to get up each morning at seven, fill his cold bath, and then parade up and down the school drive from the statue to the gates, and back, before breakfast, and until further notice. As we did our forced march each morning, longing to be back again at our poor painting, we cursed that fool of a master.

At length this period of my last school days ended. I was fourteen and a half. Closing my eyes—for this is the only way to recall the past—I try to arrange the pages of those days when I had to go out into the world.

What was to be done with me? There was no question of that sort with my eldest brother, William, for he was helping to farm some land my mother had taken for her small herd of Red Polls—a herd which, since then, he has made famous. His line lay clear ahead—he was born a farmer, but "Alfred did nothing but draw", and how to make him an artist was a problem, puzzling indeed to my country parents. Besides, artists were poor, starving folk, few ever succeeding.

My father had a literary brother, Uncle James, of whom I only used to hear, but never saw. This uncle had begun life with a Colchester bookseller, and finally became first reader, I believe, at Bentleys, the publishers, and wrote for some years for the *Temple Bar* magazine. Piles of these magazines used to be stored in a cupboard at home, and some years ago, when I was old enough to appreciate it, I read in one of these a long article by James Munnings, on Keats. In the end, Uncle James went to Australia and died there. My mother has told me that before he went away George Eliot gave him a cheque for one hundred pounds and a pair of carpet slippers embroidered by herself. Bentleys published a memoir of James Munnings, and I believe we have a copy somewhere.

This explains how and why my father wrote to Bentleys about

me. Nothing came of this, and he had all but arranged with Jarrolds, the publishers of Norwich, that I should go there in some form of employment, when, by a mere chance, my portfolio of drawings and paintings was shown to an enthusiast, who declared that I must not go into the publishing world, but into the lithographic. He not only did this, but told my father of the two leading firms in Norwich.

On visiting the first of these two, my portfolio was shown to their head artist, a Mr. Howitt, and my father brought back with him a coloured advertisement for some dentifrice which I was to copy. I remember it so well. There were crimson roses and a jar of toothpaste with lettering. A most wonderful copy was made, letters and all complete—but I did not go to that firm. It was the other firm, Page Bros. & Co., to which I finally was bound apprentice for the term of six years, my father paying a premium of forty pounds.

I can see myself now with Mother, who took me there, passing through the works and upstairs to the "artists' room". This was a light room with long, wide benches below very tall north windows, the width of the artists' benches being the same width as a window. White frosted-glass partitions separated each man from his neighbour.

There were six men sitting there on tall stools. The bench that was to be mine was next to that of the head artist, a Mr. Macready, a kind and, as I found later, well-read Scotsman, with a clipped, iron-grey beard and moustache and gold spectacles. My life was happy through his kindness and love of books. All the good books I got out of the Free Library were taken out entirely on his advice.

The day came when I settled in my Aunt Jane's home in the west side of Norwich, and from there did my first of thousands of walks to and from the firm of Page Bros. & Co. I must have stayed with Aunt Jane for at least three or four years. By the way, she was quite an amateur artist, and used to teach me a lot about drawing and shading, until one lesson at the School of Art placed me ahead of her.

I particularly remember my very beginning at the artists' room, for the youngest man, whose place I filled, at once took me in hand, showing me how to mix six saucers of a particular precious kind of lithographic ink for the six artists. This was my first job—a job which had to be done exactly right every morning for a long period, until I proved that my time was worth more to my employers. Then a printer's boy from the works was taught to do it instead.

## CHAPTER VII

### NORFOLK CHURCHES

**M**Y very first lithographic performance was a fretwork design on stone. I scraped out a mistake, making a hole like a grave in the stone's surface. To my alarm, it was found out in the press room, a bare white patch showing on the black fretwork pattern, and the stone had to be re-polished, and I did the pattern all over again.

I soon found myself among friends, although I was not spoilt. Those six other artists took an interest in me and helped me in my work, which became so thrilling and engrossing at times that I was sorry to leave it at seven o'clock. Our hours were from nine till one o'clock and from two till seven, when I walked straight down to the School of Art, working there until nine. So I continued for six years, which sped away all too fast.

The half-days on Saturdays came and went in swift succession, punctuating the months and years. With a friend from the School of Art, on bicycles (which gave place to newer and later designs year by year), did I cover the face of an unspoilt Norfolk. We must have seen the inside of every church, and as my friend was studying stained-glass design as well as architecture, our jaunts were full of interest.

Those great Norfolk churches of Sall, Cawston, Walsingham, Brisley, Aylsham, Brancaster, Blakeney, Cley, Salhouse and Morston were familiar to us, seen against the skyline or a wide setting of woodlands and fields. Cawston was our favourite journey, through Blickling and past the famous hall. Morston, with its interior of bare, damp-stained walls and ancient pews and floor, had attractions too, standing there on its low mound, bounded by a wall, the salt marsh and sea far in the distance. Before the days of the motor-car no other part of England was so unspoiled as Norfolk, or possessed that far-away air of peace which breathed the spirit of the past.

Norwich itself was then a beautiful place, and looked almost the same as it must have done in the days of Crome and Cotman. I now realise what a playground it was for the artist. No wonder it had its famous Norwich School of Painters, for the artist is dependent on his environment, and no artists had a more truly picturesque home than this old city of gardens, with its cathedral,

its fifty churches, its river with wherries, boats and barges, quays and bridges. There are towers on the ancient walls of the city, alley-ways leading to courtyards and back streets, with churches hidden away, set in churchyards filled with tombs of parishioners.

As I became older, I became more and more unconsciously in love with those gabled houses in their narrow streets. Such an unlimited wealth of motifs would tempt the dullest painter. This city should never have been spoilt, but preserved and renovated, restored and cared for as a time-honoured relic of the past. It was its ancient beauty, without any doubt, that produced those artists. Were they there to-day they might go on seeking for vanished inspirations in vain, both in the city and its surroundings, Trowse, Lakenham, Thorpe, the Dolphin Inn, and Costessey. Shades of Crome and Cotman might well sigh around the approaches of Thorpe.

In the eighteen-nineties Thorpe Gardens were all that one could imagine such a place to have been in the days of Stannard and Thirtle. I can think of nothing more holiday-like or care-free than they looked, with their boats and riverside lawn and frontage.

Am I too full of regrets? Do I harp too long on the past? I reply, that no one with an eye to see, or a heart to feel, and a memory of how places once looked a long time ago, could do otherwise than regret what has happened to them since then.

As I grew older and rode more up-to-date bicycles I discovered new places. Often, with water-colours or oils, I used to sit and paint by the riverside below King Street, or in the Close, at the horse sales, Cattle Market or in inn yards. I blame myself for not painting more, but after a week's work, each day from nine in the morning till nine at night, the spirit arose and rebelled, and mostly we were off afoot or on wheels. There is nothing better than the bicycle for seeing a county. You carried what you needed, and left your machine against a stile, in a yard or by a porch, and, with the exception of punctures or a strong head-wind, the bicycle is a perfect form of travel.

When my friend and I really wanted to give ourselves the utmost enjoyment of seeing without too much weary pedalling, we went out north-east of Norwich to Ranworth church, which was in a picturesque and unrestored condition. This place was unlike any other, and stood above a beautiful broad with old houses and staithe complete. Here they cut the reeds for thatching. Here came a solitary wherry. Wildfowl were there in flocks, and from the church tower on its wooded hill you could

see the country afar over the rich wooded landscape towards Woodbastwick and across the marsh and broadland to the far-stretching, low horizon.

On a Friday evening at the School of Art I might say to my stained-glass friend (Starmer was his name), "Let's go to Caistor and Stoke Holy Cross and Shotesham to-morrow." And if the Saturday were fine I don't know how I got through the morning's work. What a longing to be out on that road from Bracondale, over Trowse bridge to Stoke, with its water-mill, and to Caistor, a famous Roman camp where a grey church stood inside the hoary mounds among gnarled oaks. No place more romantic, no place so satisfying to the soul as the slopes of those grass-grown Roman ramparts on a warm, sunny afternoon.

But yet more scenes were ahead as we came to Shotesham, with its common and flint-built church on a mound.

There opposite the church stood the Queen-Anne-fronted Duke's Head, where we used to have tea. I can imagine no more beautiful English scene than the church among the elms on that hill at the end of Shotesham Common. Shotesham, to me, meant joy and holiday and no work. Little did I know that years later I should live over at Swainsthorpe, within a few miles of it, for six blessed years.

And now to the more serious and technical side of my carefree existence. My weekly wage began at two shillings and sixpence, and increased as I became more useful, until after years of toil I arrived at the stupendous sum of one pound ten shillings per week—which all goes to prove that we can be happy without wealth. I must, however, admit that I often sold my work at the exhibitions of the Norwich Art Circle for sums reaching six and ten guineas—a guinea was a very large sum. My first stunned me with its possibilities.

All artists can look back and remember early patrons. My early patron was the kindest, gayest, most happy and optimistic friend a youth ever had. He was John Shaw Tomkins, director of Caley's Chocolate, next door to Page Bros. He straightened out and helped the whole course of my life. I never knew a man who laughed as he laughed or who in the real sense of the word was such a Christian. He was full of energy and ideas, and moved about at twice the pace of an ordinary man.

Let me describe him. Fairly tall; fair, curly hair worn shortish; scant brows; busy, merry eyes which took in everything and everybody and were set rather deeply and screwed up in a smile. He always wore a good, homespun suit and beautifully soft collars, and always had something quiet and good in the way



of neckties. On his head was a round black alpaca cap. But his mouth!—the firmest, the kindest and most cheerful feature in his benevolent, clean-shaven face.

We knew his quick step as he came through the double spring doors into the artists' room. He brought a breeze with him, and always had a bundle of papers under his arm. The manager, Mr. Lanham, would be sent for, and the ideas began to flow: ideas for posters, for box tops, for Christmas novelties, for crackers. As I learned more and more at the School of Art and my drawing made strides, I was always the one who had to carry out these ideas of his, and this arrangement went on to the end of my six years.

He bought my best water-colours, and when my time was up and I went to the country to paint, he still gave me work, designing posters and box-tops. He commissioned me to paint his father, which I did—the old man posing on a garden seat surrounded by white phlox and Canterbury bells, with his collie by his side.

On later occasions Mr. Tomkins took me with him to The Hague, to Amsterdam and to Berlin, then on to Leipzig Fair. At Leipzig he did great business through a fat interpreter, a Herr Hoffman, who had a bright-red, curly beard and a fat stomach.

A. J. Caley & Son ran a luxurious-looking stall in one of the departments of this great fair at Leipzig, and Tomkins wanted posters. We went out with Herr Hoffman and bought great rolls of calico-lined cartridge paper, colours and brushes, and soon, watched by an admiring crowd, I was at it, not caring for anyone. Such doings seem utterly impossible to me now. They were not in those youthful days. I wasn't yet twenty.

I plainly see myself in an event one night after we had been to a music-hall show, with Eugene Sandow performing. Shaw Tomkins was bright and happy, and the gayest teetotaller in the world. On this particular evening I had been drinking strong lager beer, and in our bedroom I insisted on standing on my head to show how steady I was, but came down with a crash on the floor. It was no good. I could not stand on my head.

The following year our journeys took us to Dresden, where we spent hours among pictures. What days for an artist youth! Then on to Schiller's home, to Rudolstadt, Lichtenfels, Nuremberg, Coburg and Neustadt. In village after village in the Thüringer Wald we went into peasant homes and saw families working on toy animals. These were in papier-mâché, delivered by the gross to each family, who, between them, for months, painted and finished them from day to day. For instance, if a

lion were the subject, the models were dipped into a bath of buff-coloured liquid. Grosses of these stood in rows, drying on tables. Then a member of the family would paint only the dark mane and end of the tail. Another, in turn, stuck in the eyes, and yet another painted the pink mouth, and so on. In these places you meet strong girls, carrying, hooked on both shoulders, enormous baskets filled with dolls or animals, either going to or from the factory. Once we met a broad-built, rosy-looking girl thus laden. The holder on one shoulder had given way and the toys were spilled all over the street. We stopped and helped her to pick them up. Her smile was wonderful.

On these journeys with Shaw Tomkins I was his guest. Our last jaunt was when I was well on in my twenties. On that occasion we travelled home through Switzerland to Paris, and there I called on my old friends at Julians in their large and grimy studio in the Rue de Seine. I can never pay sufficient homage to my old friend, long since gone, for those early travels.



## CHAPTER VIII

### LITHOGRAPHIC ARTISTS

**B**UT this is far from that artists' room where Shaw Tomkins so often sprang in on us in our long painter blouses, each sitting on a tall stool.

In those days the lithographic artist, now almost extinct, was quite an individual, and it seemed to me that the more brilliant he was, the more curious and intemperate were his habits.

Here I am referring to one called Tricket, a Yorkshireman, who was a most wonderful performer on the stones, and would stipple for days twelve or more colour impressions on as many stones; yellow first, flesh tint next, red next, then crimson, then pale blue and greys, followed by dark blue, brown and so on. At the top of each stone were what were called register marks, so that when the proof was being pulled, one colour after another, a needle pierced the register marks of the proofs on to the same marks on the stones, ensuring that each colour impression fitted exactly on the last. This was most important. Yet I have seen Tricket, far from sober, doing this delicate work. He had his bouts, and took a great deal of snuff.

Mr. Macready, grey, sober and proper, always neat and clean, looked after me in my beginnings. He told me of *Lorna Doone*. What a book for a youth! He was my literary adviser, and soon I was full of Tennyson, Scott, Dumas, Thackeray.

This was one side of my life, the School of Art being the other. Again a kind man's face comes forward from all those of the past as I seek him out. He was the Headmaster, Walter Scott, an honest soul if ever there was one; perhaps more often in my mind than any other friend of that period, for he made me see values, tones and shadow shapes. He lectured us on being sincere and being serious with our studies. Whatever we did we should do well, and not "play about". This patient, persevering man was a contemporary of George Clausen's, and studied with him at Kensington in his youth.

Scott, first and foremost of my guides, had a steady, hazel eye, which looked at you from under brown eyebrows. His light brown beard was clipped; he wore a full moustache; his hair was well brushed, and his homespun suit a shade of brown.

I hear him now, showing me this and that shadow shape or

reflected light in an antique. He lived in a comfortable home in Queen's Road, Norwich, and well I knew it, for I often stayed there a night when I lived away in Suffolk in later years. His wife, a homely soul, with bright eyes and Warwickshire accent, adored and looked after him like a child. They had no family. "Worlter" she called him. He was prone to bronchitis, and in the winter she buttoned him up and wrapped a wool comforter round his neck and bade him good-bye at the front door, saying, "Be careful how you go, Worlter", or, "I may look in and call for you this afternoon". Scott would walk away with his bowler hat slightly forward and on one side, looking fresh, rosy and happy. His appearance was a testimony to the good wife in the background.

"Munnings," Scott used to say, "whatever you do, remember the tone." He may know that I'm writing this. I hope he does.

"I 'ope," as old Milton, living here at Withypool, always replies when I leave him with the words, "See you soon."

There was also teaching in the antique room a Miss Gertrude Offord. Her name was always in the Academy catalogues of the 'eighties and 'nineties, for she was a famous water-colour painter of flowers. Those large, imperial-sized creations of peonies, roses or dahlias were rich and fully washed in, strong, fresh and brilliant. I saw them, second to none, on the thickly hung walls of the water-colour room when I went up to the Academy of the days of Leighton, Millais, Herkomer, Forbes and the rest.

Tall, middle-aged, looking younger than she was, she had a clever, æsthetic face. She wore a fringe, and her strong, dark, wavy hair, slightly grey, was parted in the middle. Her nose was purely aquiline, and the plainly marked eyebrows were often raised in humorous astonishment as she beamed at you with intelligent grey eyes, always holding the tip of her pencil to her lips as she talked. She had clever hands, and was ready to help you when necessary. For the greater part of six years I worked under her. I can well remember her ways of teaching and correcting. She had a quick eye. What lessons she gave in water-colour painting! Her enthusiasm was as great as her skill. She was part of those old rooms which have long since passed out of use as an Art School.

The Norwich School of Art was above the Free Library, reached by a broad, well-trodden stone staircase. It had a pleasant, studious atmosphere which for some unexplained reason made me want to work. Beautiful, diffused top lighting by day and gaslight at night made work a joy. The faded grey colouring

of the rooms was a perfect background to everything—students in blouses working at easels, large casts of Greek and Roman fragments with slight dust settlements on top surfaces, aged castor-oil plants in green tubs.

In the model room groups of plaster casts of cubes, cylinders, vases, triangles, all white, were placed on boards, remaining there for students making laboriously shaded studies. My artistic career began when my eyes were opened to all the never-ending wonders of perspective and light and shade seen in such a group.

From this room, where a master called Sims and a Miss Holmes were in charge, I moved on to the antique room. Here was another landmark. I started with light and shade from an ornamental bas-relief, in black and white. I did many of these, some in sepia. What a lot I learned from Miss Offord! Then, reaching greater heights, stretching a double elephant sheet of thick Watman paper, I began a sepia from the Trajan Scroll, and worked at it until it was all but stereoscopic in appearance.

My next task was the never-to-be-forgotten horse's head from the Parthenon; and all through the hours of work at lithography from nine till seven I lived only to go on with that splendid horse's head in sepia from seven to nine! The hours spent on it each evening slipped away too fast, but they were not wasted, for I learned all I know of a horse's head from that cast. Alas! my memory often fails. Sculptors have copied it, used it, repeated it all the world over. It is alive, and belongs to an age of horses and great sculpture.

Memory recalls my first antique figure, the Discobolus. So, with plumb line, proportion, anatomy, I went on from one figure to another. I can't think why I never did the Venus de Milo. She was there, and I was reminded of those days only last week, when I found myself visiting the Taunton School of Art and saw there this lovely figure placed, perhaps by accident, in a most interesting lighting, near a window. What an inspiration! What a task for the student able to draw! Such a beautiful statue is better practice for the beginner than any shifting human model.

Then to the painting room. Having painted still-life groups in water-colour and gained confidence in exams, I began in oils. All artists must surely recall their first effort in oils. But I was under good folk who knew their medium and had been trained in traditional methods of paint, and gradually I learned how to use it. Ever since then I have been trying and trying, and find my life almost gone. How it has gone! When did it speed its fastest?—I am unable to say.

Art is long, life is short. Masfield once sent me a copy of his "Daffodil Fields" with this written on the fly-leaf:

Man with his burning soul  
Hath but an hour of breath  
To build a ship of Truth  
On which his soul may sail,  
Sail on a sea of death.  
For death takes toll  
Of beauty, courage, youth,  
Of all but Truth.

Last, but not least, was the life room, and there the more advanced students worked twice a week. There I met the head artist from the other lithographic firm where I first applied for a job, a Mr. Sydney Howitt. A real Victorian; a good artist and draughtsman, besides being a character. He was a man of sixty, with a rubicund face, a largish, grey moustache, real mutton-chop whiskers and hair parted in the middle. He belonged to the du Maurier period; rather like an elderly Taffy out of *Trilby*, still carrying on a sort of tradition of the old Norwich School.

CHAPTER IX  
AT THE THEATRE

THE word "Trilby" will date the time I am writing of, for the book came out about then. Everybody was reading it. It was the first new novel I ever bought for myself. There were "Trilby" hats, "Trilby" shoes, "Trilby" ties and "Trilby" everything. A man looking for his hat would say, "Where's my Trilby?"

We then had a marvellous mare at home of that name, and she won prizes at every show in the district. When staying at home on a holiday, I accompanied Saxby to some of those horse shows, entering country towns in style beneath rows of flags and bunting stretched across streets, to the usual sound of pealing bells and neighing of horses. Saxby did the showing, whilst I looked on, getting a thrill when Trilby, as usual, was pulled in and placed first.

Years later I found in Julian's Atelier in Paris the same life as that described in du Maurier's story. And what a play it was, with Tree as Svengali and Dorothea Baird as Trilby!

In my opinion, with Doré's *Don Quixote*, *Trilby* is the best illustrated story in the world. *Peter Ibbetson* might be coupled with it. How often have I, since then, talked with the late Gerald du Maurier in the Garrick Club, of *Trilby*. He loved telling of days when they were children in Passy with their father, George du Maurier. I saw the play in the old Theatre Royal in Norwich, with Laurence Irving in the part of Svengali, and could find, in an early sketch-book, drawings of him in various scenes; one of the end, with his head hanging down over the table. Little did I dream in those days that I should ever see the famous son of the author of *Trilby* in many plays, or that I should ever be a member of the Garrick.

My first play may have been "The Silver King", but one of the earliest I saw was "Richard III", with Osmond Tearle, father of Godfrey Tearle, as the hunchback. That same sketch-book holds drawings of him also. Edward Compton's was a well-known company that came to Norwich, and I can find sketches of him as Charles Surface.

I spent my last two years in Norwich in the parish of Thorpe, lodging in the house of a rather masterful widow, a Mrs. Stubbs,

whose late husband had won shooting prizes at Bisley on more than one occasion, and whose enlarged photograph, showing a delicate man with a black beard and moustache, hung over the mantelpiece in the dining-room. Two other young men lodged there, one articted to an auctioneer, the other to electrical engineering. The name of Mrs. Stubbs' house, "Lyndhurst", was painted in pale letters on the gate.

Only a few doors away stood a detached residence with an air about it, famous for its collection of John Sell Cotman pictures. The possessor was the great James Reeve, curator of the Castle Museum and Art Gallery. Naturally I was often in that Art Gallery, and got to know Mr. Reeve, who took me under his wing. He helped me a lot after I left Norwich by commissioning a picture for the Art Gallery and purchasing another. The first—a water-colour of a horse fair—hangs there to-day. For the other—an oil, fifty inches by thirty inches, of an old countryman leading a mare and foal by a blossoming elder-bush—I was paid eighty-five pounds, a vast fortune for me then.

This famous expert, Mr. Reeve, this old bachelor with a large, clean-shaven face, quizzical expression, grey side-whiskers, searching grey eyes and short, stiff figure, always wore a black tail-coat, striped trousers, a starched collar with gills, a silk hat and massive gold watch-chain across his stomach. He belonged to the Dickens period. He was a cigar-smoker, and it was in his house at Thorpe I first smoked a cigar.

On these visits (I was then about eighteen) he showed me his drawings, going from room to room, upstairs and down. Often, with warning forefinger raised, he lectured me on thoroughness in work. "You young —," he used to say. "You want to run before you can walk!" James Reeve had no doubts and made no mistakes in his judgment on pictures of the Norwich School. He knew a Crome at sight, or any of the other painters of that set, and advised and purchased for Mr. Russell Colman, whose collection of the Norwich School is now world famous.

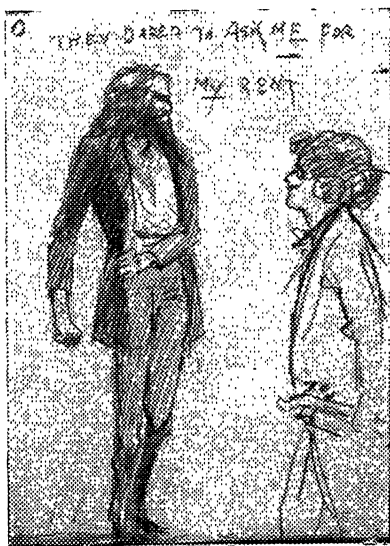
A better individual type of Victorian never existed than this stiff-built, straight-minded curator of the Norwich Castle Museum, with his port and Sunday afternoon cigar. He certainly was one of my guiding influences, and told me the truth with his heels together and a loud slap of his two palms. His eye followed me afar then, as I humbly hope it does now.

In spite of the influence of James Reeve, or Walter Scott, or John Shaw Tomkins or Mrs. Stubbs and her mastery, I am aware that as I drew on towards the last days of my Norwich existence my steps wandered from the strict path of virtue; companions



who went with me to the Play would stand me a bitter in the Theatre bar. With another youthful friend I would, for the sum of sixpence, enter and stroll around what was then known as Chapel Field Gardens, when on Thursday nights a band played and pretty shop-girls walked in twos or three in charming dresses. They never even regarded me, shy as a colt, as they passed along the walks under the large trees, all lit with coloured lights. These warm summer nights went mostly to the music of Gilbert and Sullivan and waltzes played by the band of whatever cavalry regiment was then stationed in Norwich.

There came to lodge with Mrs. Stubbs a very great swell—a Government Inspector of Post Offices, whose name was Ralph Wernham. He was interesting, and got me books and made me read poetry. He took me to plays and to the bar of the old Maid's Head. A very high-class bar this was, too, with a plate-glass polish on an old circular mahogany table. There were prints on the walls, and there was much polished brass and copper about. A real and true haven of peace and comfort. Wernham was leading me in the right paths; I have known that snug haven for years.



*Drawing from early sketch-book.  
Laurence Irving as Svengali, Theatre  
Royal, Norwich.*

CHAPTER X  
BUNGAY RACES

NOW, it happened that this Wernham was to share the greatest day of my life. On that stupendous day, just before eight o'clock, as I was about to rise, he tapped at my bedroom door and walked in with two letters in his hand, saying, "Here are two notices from the Academy; behold the red letters on the back! One to say you have something hung, the other that something is out!"

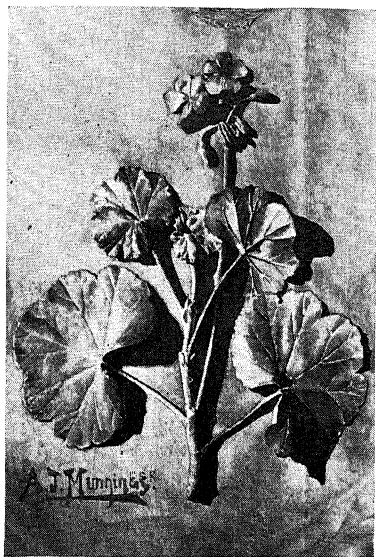
The secret was out. On the advice of Mr. Scott, my head master, I had sent two works to the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colour, and had them accepted. On his further advice I followed this up, not telling another soul, by sending three oils to the Royal Academy.

Knowing nothing, and being innocent of the ways of that great unknown institution, I little dreamt that these two letters lay waiting on the breakfast table. Wernham—who was always down first—being a Post Office official, knew at once their meaning and, guessing what I had done and bringing me those letters, he not only prepared me for the contents, but shared in the tremendous excitement when I opened them and found I had two in and one out!

Could such a thing be possible? Here was I, a raw, simple, provincial youth, knowing nothing of the great Royal Academy, receiving on this Thursday before the Varnishing Day—which was without a doubt on the following Monday—a surprise and a thrill such as I have never since experienced, or ever will again. When I became an A.R.A., or even President, I did not feel the same overwhelming joy that was mine that morning.

As I recovered my balance and began to dress, my good friend said, "On such an occasion as this you must not go to business: this is the first day of Bungay Races, and you are coming with me."

Here was a poser! Nobody had telephones then. I hesitated, then suddenly decided to go, for what did anything matter now that I had two pictures hung in the Royal Academy? And so we got into a first-class carriage of the race train (my first luxury journey), and soon found ourselves walking with a crowd to the common and the stands.



*Early sepia water-colour from cast (School of Art work).*



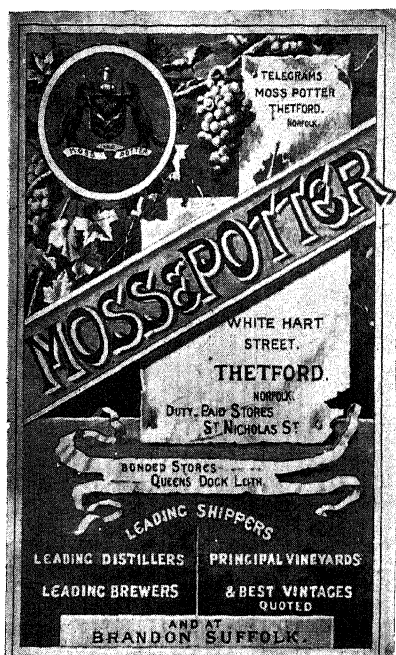
*Pencil drawing of a cousin, dated October 1899.*



*Two students at Norwich School of Art.*



*The Artists' Room at Page Brothers. "In our long painter blouses, each sitting on a tall stool." See page 57.*



*Two early designs of lithographed covers for catalogues.*

My first real race-meeting! There were picturesque gypsies: two tall, handsome sisters, the Grays, with their mother, Kiomi, whom I afterwards knew, and who was once model to Frederick Sandys. She could talk of "Mr. Rossetti" and "Mr. Millais" and others by the hour, and told how she posed to Sandys for his picture of "The Prophetess", keeping her eyes fixed for hours on one point as he drew. The tall daughters were slim, brown, dark and magnificent in black silk, large black feathered hats and gold earrings. Nelly, the elder, had the best caravan—all green and gold—that I ever saw.

But I must keep to the meeting. Wernham, wearing a brown bowler, pepper-and-salt covert coat, race-glasses and white gardenia, went off to bet on the first race, leaving me to go where I pleased, with a pass in or out of the enclosure. This was a plunge into the most vividly coloured phase of life I had so far seen. I had known horse sales in Norwich, local races and regattas; but what were they compared to this vast fair and meeting combined on Bungay Common?

There were roundabouts, shooting-galleries, swinging-boats and coconut shies; large eating- and drinking-tents, flags flying, and thousands of oranges blazing on stalls in the sun. I had never seen such droves of ponies and gypsy lads. But all this, with music and noise, died away and dwindled to nothing when I saw the thoroughbred horses and jockeys—professional and gentlemen riders (riding with a proper length, and not with the short leathers of to-day)—in bright silk colours, going off down the course.

So imagine me, gaping at the scene now thrown at me all at once. The peaceful School of Art, the smelly artists' room faded away, and I began to live! I had never imagined such a sight, although my imagination went as far as prairie fires.

And so race followed race, steeple-chase or hurdle, while I stood either at the open ditch or water-jump seeing such colour and action as I had never dreamed of. So ended my first race day.

Wernham, who had betted on each race, was only five pounds to the good, and meant to follow it up and improve on the morrow at the second day. He took me out to dinner that night with my head full of jockeys in silks against the sky, on horses racing at and flying over great fences.

More was to follow. Next morning he tapped at my door and said, "You must come racing again." I didn't refuse. Nothing mattered. I was an artist with two pictures hung in the Academy! Besides, my time in the lithographic business was shortly to end, and I was to start painting and burn my boats.

We went again, Wernham winning money on a horse called Longcloth, and I seeing a horse lying dead with a broken neck. The noise of the fair was as great and the sun on the striped awnings and oranges as flaming and brilliant as before, the turf on the common springy and full of scents, with skylarks above.

Thus ended two great days in my life, and soon after I did a set of four pastels—the jumps, the finish and all the rest—and sold them for what I thought was a lot of money.

Later on my kind friend wrote a wonderful column about my pictures being hung, which appeared in the *Eastern Daily Press* and put me in the limelight. Once he took me with him to see his old college at Cambridge, and gave me another royal day when we went to Epsom and I saw my first Derby from the stand.

What a day for me, seeing those vast crowds and all the coaches and vehicles coming on to the Downs! We went from Victoria, and walked across to the stands. That was Flying Fox's year, and the grey French horse, Holocaust, ridden by Tod Sloane, with the new monkey-seat, broke his fetlock and was destroyed.

But that crowded, gigantic occasion at Epsom had not the colour of Bungay. Perhaps I was pinned in the vast stand for too long and was not inclined to get into the crowd. To see Epsom one must be on the members' stand and have access to the course and get back and forth to the paddock. The crowd, like that of the Grand National, is becoming beyond human endurance.

Some years ago Miss Helen Mackie, the artist, told me that Wernham was a cousin of hers and that he was dead. No wonder I felt a cloud across the sun—a dreary moment—as she told me this. He was a scholar and a gentleman—and he smoked too many cigarettes. He may, in turn, be at my elbow now as I write. I wonder.

## CHAPTER XI

### R. A. PICTURES AND SUFFOLK MARSHES

**B**UT what of those first Academy pictures of mine? I will begin with the unlucky one of the three sent in—the real ambitious effort. It was called “Evening on the Suffolk Marshes”, and was intended to be a famous and immortal masterpiece. Imagine me then, full of the youthful ardour of ambitious seventeen, in the stable yard at my old home; an easel of some sort—I quite forget now what it was like—a canvas four feet six inches by three feet; a black japanned paint-box, with the old long, narrow tubes in it, on the ground. My design is ready on the canvas, and I am listening anxiously, waiting for a horse! I hear its step drawing near: a boy has gone to fetch it from the meadow, and now Teddy Holmes—that’s his name—appears leading a large white cart-mare on a halter.

I stand her where I want her, get back to my easel, and with men’s faces looking out of the mill windows and doors I begin to paint. I am full of bottled-up desire to do this, after a year’s restraint in the Norwich artists’ room; for I have not been able to paint a horse out of doors in oils since my August holiday of last year.

I can see the mare now as if it were only yesterday, with the boy Teddy holding her. The white sides of the mill with its windows are behind. I see Sam Notley’s face with spectacles on, and his son Albert peering out of the door at me, astounded at the size of such a canvas. I see the pigs snouting about in the straw and manure in the muck-bin. It is a placid, grey day. The boy stands holding the mare hour after hour. He has an old straw hat on his head, is in his shirt sleeves and keeps the flies away from the patient model with a spray of elder.

I am doing all that I have yearned to do for months. A lovely white mare standing there for me, and although I am not master of my paint, I have no doubts of this being a masterpiece, and revel in every stroke which models the shape of quarters, neck and head. The white on the back and top of those quarters isn’t white: the subtle grey tones are indescribable—what colour! Difficulties pile up, but I am undaunted. Old Notley creeps round behind to take a look. Ephraim Butcher—the pig

man, as he is called—stands and has a good stare. Later comes my father, driving home in his trap. He takes a glance and, like a good father, says nothing, but looks thoughtful as he walks away.

And so I began my great work, which I quite thought was easily going to win the first prize in the School of Art holiday competition. The white mare was the central horse in my arrangement of design. Two darker ones, rubbing noses, were to be standing farther back, which were only suggested there, to be put in when I could have the actual models, which was after their work. All went well. The picture was carried into the North meadow to do my foreground, distance and sky, with a horse held there, too, for values; for I had been told the all-important business of relation of one thing to another. So I went on from height to height, until I made the crude mistake of bringing a horse into the right side of the picture in the foreground and cutting it in halves—a handsome horse he was, too, called Briton, a dark chestnut. This cutting in half was my own intention, and nothing about it seemed wrong; I staked everything on the picture, feeling sure of a first prize at the school.

I was only awarded a second; and when the students were gathered together at the exhibition, Mr. Scott's remarks were followed with eagerness and attention as he came to my "Suffolk Marshes". He pointed out its virtues and all the rest.

"But," said he, "you can't cut a horse in half in the foreground like that. Besides, it is coming in profile into the picture. Were it in a crowded fair or cavalry charge it would be different."

At this all my ambitions faded out, and my large picture was not a masterpiece, after all.

Two years later I sent it to the Academy with the title "Evening on the Suffolk Marshes"—a real Academy title of the day. Landscapes were given wonderful titles then, such as "When lingering daylight welcomes night's pale green" or "The moon is up and yet it is not night". This picture was one of the three sent to the Academy for my first venture, and was the one they did not hang.

It was skied in my second attempt the year following; and as I stood gazing up at it in its place near a doorway, I heard again the monotonous cry of the corncrake, which became so familiar during those hours when I painted the distant marsh on August evenings. I must have looked a queer youth at those Varnishing Days, in what I thought were decent clothes.

Now for the two pictures which were hung. First and foremost was "Stranded", placed on the line in the Gem Room.



It sold for the great amount of fourteen guineas, to Sir W. H. Wills. This canvas was eighteen by fourteen, and it was influenced by a small painting I had seen, early in March of that year, in a gallery in Amsterdam when travelling with my friend Shaw Tomkins.

The painting was of a little girl in a pale blue overall, wearing a black stocking cap, and sitting on a sand dune. I liked that picture very much, with the bright sunlight on the blue dress, and it all came back to me at home in that August holiday, when I saw my young cousin Nina wearing just such a blue smock frock and stocking cap. Nina was about twelve, and had a twin brother Cecil. They were the children of my mother's sister—the gay and youthful Aunt Rosa of the early days at Walsham Hall. As a child I had seen my aunt at her wedding breakfast and had eaten those sweet, creamy, sherry-tasting syllabubs, and now I was painting her twins of twelve or fourteen—I was then between eighteen and nineteen.

With these two as models, I was full of ideas, and put them in a boat, the boy in the front seat, the girl on the middle one, myself in the stern, steering, and made them row me down the mill-stream, round the corner of the North meadow to the left, until we came to shallows and clumps of dark-green rushes with brown heads, which we lovers of rivers know so well. Then bright green sedges thrust against the bows, and the boy and girl began to lift an oar and push or pull it in through the rowlock. Watching this, I saw my picture, my arrangement, just as they were!

The boat was soon fastened, my canvas set on the easel, and my palette got ready for the start. I was smitten through with the newness of it all. I had seen that little picture in Amsterdam, and now I was going to try to do something here with these children in front of me in the wide-beamed, steady boat, with the August growth along the banks, and the river filled and grown up with glossy, dark masses of rush and sedge. So to the everlasting song of the warblers, sitting in the stern of the boat, easel fixed, I began my picture.

I believe I worked with the sun slightly on the left. I was so happy—never had I dreamt of painting fair hair and face in the sun with black stocking cap—and when I began the pale-blue pinafore dress I called out, "Sit quite still, Nina"—"You, Cecil; don't move while I place you". "Good girl!" I kept saying; and—"Now rest awhile." "Cecil, don't move; I'm painting you; keep your head like that!" Besides these sitters, there was the background of the river-banks and, farther away, an ancient thorn-fence in mellow August colouring, and beyond,

about half a mile distant, fields on the north side of the valley, and willows in between, far or near. I speak of these from love of it all, although they were only background, as was the warbler's ceaseless song.

This picture looked so small when I last saw it at a retrospective exhibition of my work in Norwich in the twenties. I had thought it quite a fair-sized one when I painted it.

The work went on for three mornings. My finishing touches were the light on one of the oars and a yellow water-lily lying on the floor-boards of the boat between myself and Nina as she faced my way. It lay near her small foot, and helped the composition—I forget now if I left it there. I called the picture "Stranded". The spot where I worked was near the bathing-place, where, as boys, we pulled up the dark-green rushes with their white ends, packed and tied them together in thick, buoyant bundles, and learned to swim on them. This bathing lasted for hours, and what noise we all made! What happy days!

The painting of the picture was infinite bliss, and brought with it further joys and satisfaction when it was hung and when I actually stood there in the Gem Room, on my first Varnishing Day, having at last found it, seeing that it looked quite well on the wall among the other pictures.

My story of the second picture that was sent and hung is entirely different, and of a different place and time.

At the School of Art I was already painting still life in oils, and soon began, on Saturday afternoons, to carry out box and easel to the country for landscape; but I badly wanted to find a model and do a figure somewhere outside. My ideas never failed me then—I had a bright one.

In the press room downstairs two men were always at work, graining and polishing the stones for the artists to use in their lithographic labours. These two men, like many of those in the works, were great characters. One, the older of the two, a clean-shaved, ancient, horsey-looking cove, called Russell, worked as a drover in the Cattle Market on Saturdays. I used to go and see him there, looking an entirely different individual. The other and younger man was "Jumbo" Betts—a real kind, humorous soul, who could put a wonderful polish on a stone, large or small. I can see him now, laying the steel straight-edge along the surface of a large sixty by forty. Jumbo became a friend of mine. He lived in a low haunt of the city, called Pockthorpe, not far from the Cavalry Barracks. Mousehold Heath was only just above this parish, and "Jumbo" had a portion on the allotments up there.

This time it must have been Millet's pictures that gave me an

idea; but, whatever the cause, I arranged with "Jumbo" to go round to his house with my things on a Saturday afternoon in November, and we both toiled up to his allotment, where he posed for me digging all the afternoon and again on the Sunday following.

Another memory: the digging figure, purple cabbages, yellowing leaves of fruit-bushes, the rising ground beyond—almost my first serious attempt at out-of-door figure-painting. "Jumbo" still stands there in that picture in somebody's house—he stands there in my mind, too, to-day. I believe the canvas was only eighteen by fourteen, with "Winsor and Newton" stamped on the back, and I enjoyed the painting of this in the still November afternoon with all the thrills of eager youth and inexperience.

Having tried my friend "Jumbo" in the allotment picture, I then had a more brilliant idea of using him. We arranged to take our lunch with us, and to leave on a Saturday directly work was over at one o'clock, carrying with us my things all the way to the river at Lakenham. This meant walking a considerable distance through by-lanes and straggling suburbs to Lakenham Mill.

Imagine a quiet, chill, January afternoon, a grey sky, a sluggish, narrow river between rows of bare pollarded willows, with pale dead reeds and sedges along either bank. Then came the arrival at this quiet, forlorn spot of two men, the one a stone polisher, the other an artist. We disturbed coots, which flew clucking away, skimming the water with long, thin feet. This and the cawing of distant rooks were the only sounds to break the winter sleep of that cold, still river. We hurriedly ate our food and drank some old beer which "Jumbo" had carried all the way.

He then cut a long, slim willow pole, and posed with coat collar turned up, pipe in mouth, as a man fishing. This being a small picture, I carried it through in a painting, while "Jumbo" every now and then stamped his feet on the ground until the soil quaked, beating himself with his arms to keep warm.

Dear old "Jumbo"! What a good soul! There he stood as the winter day drew on, fishing with no line, an old tin can by his side for imaginary bait. How cold we were when we packed up and started for Norwich, and how glad "Jumbo" was to have that long-promised drink at Lakenham Cock!

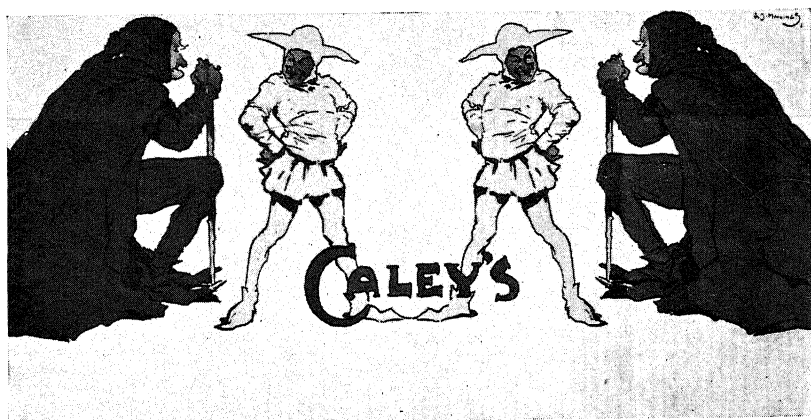
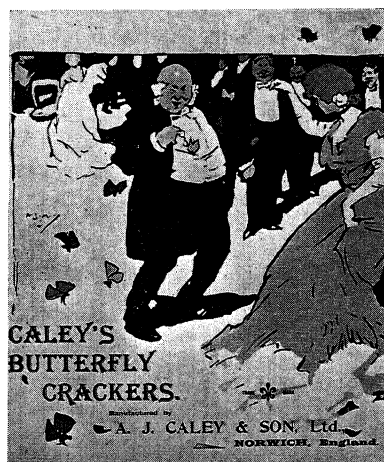
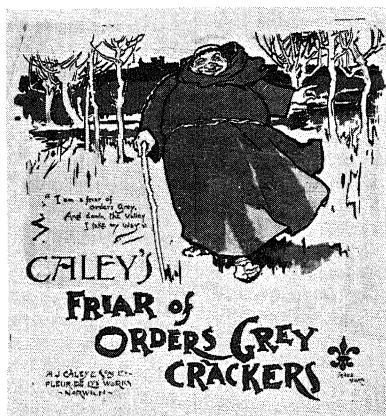
This picture, called "Pike-fishing in January", was hung on the line, and sold for ten guineas—a vast sum. So ends my story of those first two pictures hung at the Academy, and of the larger one which was not hung and which failed in being a masterpiece. Later I will relate how it found a home.

## LITHOGRAPHIC DESIGNS

MY lithographic work had grown, from year to year, more and more interesting. There may have been spasms of youthful rebellion and idleness. I may have grown tired of it, with only one fortnight's holiday a year. Fourteen short, precious days in Suffolk by the river, among horses and country folk, out of the three hundred and sixty-five, were not many. How I kept up any flow of ideas and designs, or how I stood the long hours from nine till seven, year in and year out, I do not know. It is certain that it takes a lot of work to kill a youth or a man.

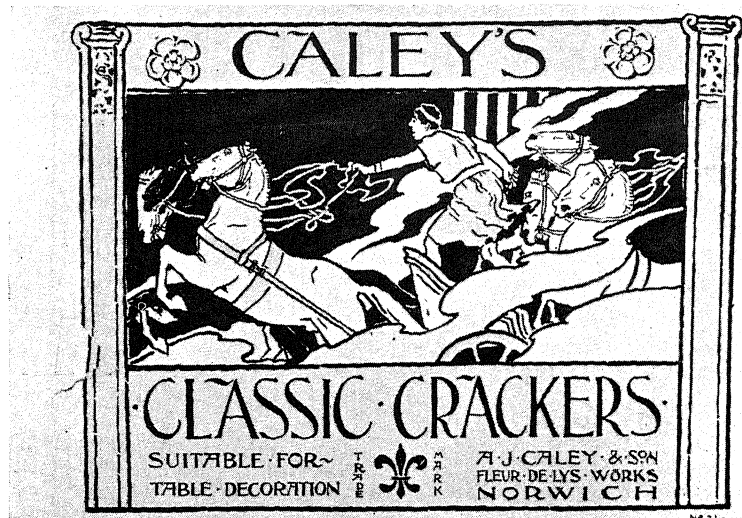
As those years went on my designs must have brought a great deal of business to Page Bros. & Co., Ltd., of Norwich, for I often had more work handed to me than I could cope with. The manager might come with a packet of papers and ask me to leave what I was doing and get out a rough design at once, as it was urgent, so much so that unless it were done by to-morrow, some other firm which had already submitted quotations and designs for the advertising of the commodity might get the order. These often went to many thousands of copies. The design might be for lemonade—chocolates—mustard—whisky—pills—even for poultry foods or election posters. Yet whatever I was then doing would have to be left, and the other started, which meant that I must stir up my imagination and think hard to get an idea—something for printing in three or more colours, something effective and with good spacing. A well-used brain soon starts off—mine did then—and I always had a design ready, and more often than not the firm got the order.

Now and then I made a hit. One of my designs of that day was all over London on every hoarding just after 1918. It was for Caley's Christmas Crackers—a tall, upright poster showing Elizabethan 'prentice boys in red running up a street in the snow. The arrangement is right; and looking at it to-day in smaller size—I still have the sketch—I realize that my School of Art training in the antique and life gave me advantages. Another reason for being able to deal with these designs was that I continually went on from one thing to another, and became trained to invent and draw out of my head without the model.



*Designs for Caley's Crackers. "Now and then I made a hit."*

Top left: A large poster with scarlet figures, which appeared all over the country.  
See page 72.



*More designs for Caley's Crackers.*  
*Bottom: Little Boy Blue, was a bright royal blue.*



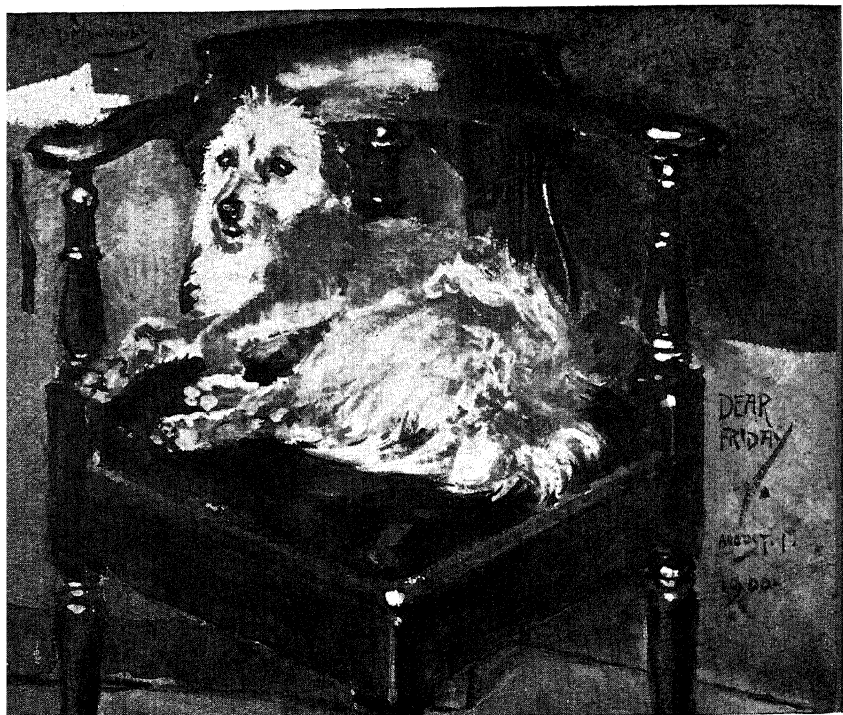
*A design that won first prize of three guineas in a competition in The Cyclist for the best advertisement for Waverley Cycles. Date 1895. See page 74.*





Both 16" x 10"

Left: Pen-and-ink costume drawing "The Bachelor".  
 Right: Elsie's Waltz. "I was attracted by a fair-haired girl in the shop (Boswell's) who could sing."  
 See page 83.



My old dog Friday, curled up in an armchair in the Studio. Water-colour, dated 1900.



Practice is the thing, and many difficulties are mastered through it. All this may suggest I was a sort of wonder, but alas! I had the failings of youth. I was lazy, and would have been worse but for the discipline of business.

How happy I was when I had a new batch of cracker-box tops to do! There was a thin kind of paper known as double crown which we had for sketch designs as a rule. With a quick charcoal rough-out and then powdered colours ground by hand, I made my design in a morning, and often did two a day—always with the knowledge that my good friend Shaw Tomkins, at Caley's next door, would come in with his quick step and bright smile and approve of what I had done. I can recall but few instances of disapproval.

On one occasion, towards Christmas, we all hoped for presents of chocolates. I did a drawing of the room and ourselves standing in a half-circle round the manager, a Mr. Lanham, who wore a black velvet skull-cap. It shows him as a schoolmaster and ourselves as grown-up boys. He was questioning us.

"Boys," he says, "why is Mr. Tomkins a very nice man?"

"Because he always sends us chocolates for Christmas," is the reply.

This was sent, carefully wrapped, to Caley's and, sure enough, a day or two before Christmas eight large boxes of chocolates arrived, one for each of us.

My portraits of those artists are correct, and on looking at the drawing now I smile—alas! I smile sadly, for it takes me back to those long hours in that well-lit room where I played and worked, and where I kept a book of Moxon's works of Tennyson under my desk, and where I learned the whole of "Locksley Hall" by heart, "The Lady of Shalott", "The Miller's Daughter"—which incidentally I illustrated for the Norwich Art Circle black-and-white exhibition. "Mariana in the Moated Grange" was my favourite, and long since then, reading Fitzgerald's letters, I find that he places this as one of Tennyson's best. "The Passing of Arthur", "Blow, Bugle, Blow" and many more were stored in my head—my memory was in training. I was so full of Tennyson that I made a small boy—a printer's boy—learn "The Poet's Song", which he used to repeat to me at intervals until he grew too big to mix lithographic ink, and another boy came.

The rain had fallen, the Poet arose,  
He pass'd by the town and out of the street.  
A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,  
And waves of shadow went over the wheat.

I was always a reader, and could get any book I wanted from the Free Library, below the School of Art. I began life in that room at the age of fourteen and went on until I was twenty, reading a lot in my spare time. Yet it is difficult for me to say which novel of all those I read then I liked the most.

*Vanity Fair*, although for grown-ups, came first. But I never liked the author's illustrations. Their coarseness interferes with a reader's conception of the characters. I see Becky Sharp as a lovely creature, and Amelia, too. Again and again have I read it, and at each reading see more and more strokes of genius. The funeral of Sir Pitt Crawley is one. What a scene! When the hearse and empty carriages drive away. When they are out of sight and halt at the inn, with the sunlight glinting on the pewter-pots in the road.

Many of Scott's novels had been read out to us by our mother in earlier days, but I re-read *The Fair Maid of Perth*, *Kenilworth*, *Rob Roy* and others, and then not with the full appreciation they deserved.

*Bleak House* was a favourite, and left its mark on my mind. What descriptions! The chambers of Tulkinghorn, the lawyer; the shot in the night; his end, and afterwards as he lay there in the room. A book full of artistry, of dark moods, of forlorn park-lands—Dickens at his best.

Books were being published and read then which everyone talked of. Could we read Edna Lyall to-day? Only from sheer curiosity I might make a start with *Donovan*, yet it had a great sale, and its author made a name for herself. Another book which was a part of that period was *The Sorrows of Satan*. Marie Corelli was quite somebody in her day, which reminds me that through that story I won a competition for a design advertising bicycles.

A paper called *The Cyclist* offered a prize of three guineas for the best design advertising Waverley cycles. In Page Bros. & Co.'s time I did a drawing on a large white card; on the top was the wording "Waverley Cycles"; below was Satan facing you and sitting cross-legged on a milestone, glowering, in a rage, elbows on knees, his chin in his hands, and his tail curving away behind the milestone. Up the twisted, curving road was a merry cyclist looking back at Satan, waving his cap as he rode clear of pursuit up the hill, leaving a track which also curved down to the bottom drawing. The caption underneath was: "Satan's latest sorrow—those who ride Waverleys defy pursuit". This was sent in for competition, and behold, a week later I found I had won first prize—three guineas—and my design came out in *The Cyclist*.

Norwich Art Circle, holding a black-and-white exhibition each spring, in addition to their autumn show of pictures, gave me

something to work for. Quite a large wash drawing of Barnaby Rudge and the raven had a place of honour in the exhibition. This was the period of costume that I liked best of all. Many an evening did I sit late over the dining-room table at Mrs. Stubbs', after the others had gone to bed, working on imagined pictures of conspirators in dark avenues, of Burns' maidens standing beneath lowering skies, by roaring torrents, which had verses in the catalogue or written in the margin.

My largest of these was full-toned and dramatic, and looked like an engraving, in its lined mount and frame. The girl in this picture was my ideal—my conception of a heroine of romance. Its title, from Burns, was "Around me howls a wintry sky", etc. One more was of a country couple, staring in the moonlight at a female phantom with outstretched arms, and lovely head thrown back, appealing to the stars, her white robes trailing on the still water reflecting her luminous figure and the sickle moon. This was called "The Haunted Mere".

The mounts for these were always cut at the works, and I lined them myself, most beautifully, in Page Bros. & Co.'s time.

Of all the six artist comrades working in that room only one, a certain Phil Presents, used to sketch out of doors, go to the Art School, or exhibit at the Art Circle. He was an enthusiast and helped me on, and often we sat, working in water colours, by the river at Eaton or Earlham or in the cathedral close.

There were times when the whole room used to sing in parts and wail in sad, harmonious unison like hounds in a kennel; for the hours after two o'clock were long. It happened rarely, but it is a recollection I can't miss. There, on a November evening, with the dusk outside and noise of printing machinery below, we might, in various attitudes on our stools, be seen and heard making harmony. I cannot think why at times we all behaved like boys and sang "Sweet Genevieve" together and "Belle Mahone"—"Wait for me at Heaven's gate, swe-eet Belle Ma-hone". This was done with all the feeling we possessed. We did it to perfection if I had brought in with me two round, flask-shaped bottles of wine called "Canary Sack" from a grocery stores near by.

Some lines which I remember so well—

Soon beyond the harbour bar  
Shall my barque be sailing far . . .

and then :

Wait for me at Heaven's gate,  
Swe-eet Belle Mahone.

It is impossible to describe the melancholy of the chorus.

Why I am sad now at the thought of us doing this is hard to say. Although large and spacious, and of a good length, this room, with the gaslight and large green shades throwing a pool of light on the work in hand at each desk; with those artists of various ages, who came each to his particular stool every morning and took his money each Saturday at one o'clock, sitting there tuning away in alto, treble and bass, makes a picture that somehow stirs up saddest memory.

One of these men often had bouts of drinking. They put me in my place on occasions, for I was doing work which they could not, and bringing poster and other figure-design work to a firm that had never before done anything of the kind. For all that, they were my friends, advisers, sympathisers, and we seldom had differences of any kind, and all were good-humoured. How we laughed at times, in spite of the long hours!

But all things come to an end. I was determined to leave this room immediately I had served my six years, which ended soon after the great occasion and excitement of my first pictures being hung at the Academy.

A month afterwards, on a Saturday, at the age of twenty, I took my last week's wages, the manager vainly offering me five pounds a week—a fortune then—to stay on. I bade him and the others farewell, promising always to look in when I came to Norwich. This I did, and once, to satisfy my pride, I rode into the yard on a horse which was held by a printer's lad as I swaggered up into the dear old room—and felt a queer feeling inside, that if I wasn't careful pride would meet a fall! I often had to fight this strange feeling as I improved my position in life, for my beginning had been humble, although happy—happier than any time later, even when standing watching the Derby from the Members' Stand, or selling a picture for lots of money.

And so good-bye to my last lodgings with Mrs. Stubbs, good-bye to the walk every morning to Page Bros.—leaving at twenty to nine, passing by Mr. Reeve's house with the Cotmans, passing over the river, looking at the arches of Bishops Bridge farther up, or at wherries and barges on the other side. Good-bye to Rose Lane, to the walk past Spelman's yard and the Bell Hotel, to St. Stephen's by the ancient thatched Boar's Head, by the butcher's shop and the narrow, ancient passage, to the doors with "Page Bros. & Co., Ltd., Lithographers, Printers, Box Makers, etc." written upon them in plain letters;—doors which I had gone in and out four times a day—excepting Saturday, when it was only twice—for six long years. This walking to and from business had become a habit, and how it was all ended; finished.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MENDHAM AGAIN

I AM trying now to remember—to see clearly—my native village of Mendham, on the River Waveney, which divides Norfolk from Suffolk, and which was to be my painting-ground for six years after leaving the artists' room in Norwich. It is not easy to sort things out of the shelves of memory. At the moment my present surroundings come between me and my object—my mental picture of Mendham.

This is a perfect August morning; I am writing on the lawn of our house at Withypool. To concentrate the better, I place my elbows on the summer-house table, rest my head on my hands, close my eyes. I hear bleating sheep on the moor. Far-off sounds and the hum of bees and insects through the phlox-scented air distract my thoughts awhile. But at last I am back in my old home, seeing meadows by the river, the front lawn with two large weeping ash-trees, the drooping, tasselled green leaves of the one nearest the river hanging over the clipped fence, trailing in the slow current of the millstream. There is the same sleepy sound of the mill that we had known all the time.

Our familiar view from the mills since childhood had been across the meadows to the village, less than half a mile off. Gables and chimneys showed through apple-trees; to the right stood the flint-built church, among tall elms surrounding the churchyard. These elms, domed and shaped in massed beauty, changed as the summer days happened to be cloudy, clear, hot or cool. On such a day as this they would have appeared purple through the heat haze as we looked into the sun, our house facing south-west. The high, overhead sunlight, falling through piled-up, slow-moving clouds on to the tree-tops, would light the church roof showing through the gaps between. Yet farther to the right, the road across the narrow marshland led over an unsightly iron suspension bridge across the river.

This bridge was often a source of annoyance to our sailing. If we went on up the river the sail had to be let down and the mast unstepped, and then followed much stooping and pushing at the iron girders beneath the bridge.

Loud lapping of cool waves sounding in the dark, momentary shadow is with me now: the twittering of the gliding swallows,

which I hear in the present, takes me back yet nearer to the past and beneath that iron bridge where swallows' nests, glued fast to girders against the brick-built ends, housed young families showing open mouths and white breasts as they peered out above the water. Doubtless their descendants are skimming the river to-day as they did then; but no varnished boat with white sail comes racing along.

The road across the bridge and marsh was raised above the level of its surroundings in order to escape flooding, and led to Harleston, two miles away, the nearest town. Our wintry view towards the church, seen through bare trees, after being for weeks white with snow, would change into a February desolation of dreary wastes of flood, rows of pollard willows and solitary gateways standing above their inverted reflections, flocks of gulls wheeling white against a grey sky.

A footpath to cottages and the village beyond went across the meadows—our way to church on Sundays—and, passing through the Red Lion yard into the road, taking the left turn, brought us to the village shop—very much part of the village and of our young lives. Old Mr. Woods, the proprietor, was aged, emaciated, very small and stooping. He wore a soiled black tailed coat with an apron. He had spectacles and a black cap with a tassel. His grey beard was stained with snuff, and he trembled all the time. The shop smelt fusty, and his daughter-in-law looked as pale as the old man. I am led into a description of the occupant of this shop, its shelves of old-fashioned green cans and bottles of sweets, packets of candles and shoe-laces, because it was important in our lives, both before and after it became a post and telegraph office.

Mendham street was like many another. There were groups of old houses, some thatched, a blacksmith's shop in the middle. At the lower, western end a separate cluster of cottages stood on the south of the churchyard, where a pathway led across meadows to Withersdale and Metfield. The eastern, or top end of the street was a four cross-ways. Straight on led to the parishes of the Saints; the right to Metfield, Fressingfield and High Suffolk. The road to the left went by the carpenter's yard and shop and more cottages, the school and the vicarage, among shrubberies and trees, on rising ground to the right.

Just past the vicarage garden was the Glebe Farm, with its talkative occupant, Richmond Emmerson, known as Richmer. He was lame from soldiering. He had piercing eyes, a wide, clean-shaven mouth and grey side-whiskers, and he wore a black-and-white check scarf, a black, wideawake hat and sleeve waistcoat.

I draw a picture of him because we always passed the Glebe Farm on our walks of long ago, and never without seeing Mr. or Mrs. Emmerson—a quiet, humble housewife, a second fiddle to the great Richmer.

The house was on the corner, where the road to our home turned sharp to the left—for me a corner full of history. At this spot my father had his memorable spill when the grey came past the house at full gallop with only the broken shafts at her sides.

The carpenter's shop and yard which I have mentioned is more than a landmark; it is a promontory, a mountain on my horizon. Its owner, Fairhead, had been in our lives, I might say, since we could first see or hear. If a rat died under the floors of the house and began to smell, Fairhead appeared, and like a terrier, marked the spot, took up the boards, and discovered it. He or his men were always doing repairs to the premises, either in the yards, house, mill or cottages. We loved seeing them about, their tool-bags spread on the floor, full of chisels, planes and foot-rules, screws and nails; and many petty thefts I made from those straw-plaited bags with handles when I wanted nails. Why I ever should have loved the sight of shavings and sawdust I can't imagine, but I did; and wherever the carpenters were at work there would I be.

Serious scenes happened with long, long intervals in between, when Fairhead brought his enormous bills to the office—for he made them up very seldom, and the longer they went the worse they became. My father and he went through item after item for hours. Afterwards we might hear Mother asking why the accounts were not brought in sooner, and my father would call Fairhead a damned rascal.

But he was a good fellow, with merry blue eyes, black eyelashes, frizzy black side-whiskers and a cleft in his chin. How we loved being in his shop, where I made my boats, borrowing his chisels. It must have been during my six years of absence in Norwich that competition began to loosen the hold of Fairhead in the parish, or he retired on my father's payments, for when I came back to begin my painting the business was closed and the once busy shop, with its sawpit, sawdust, ladders and all, was silent.

I wanted a studio where I could work, and here was the place! Another carpenter—a Mr. Bedwell of Earsham, not far away—had bought it, but was not using it. This was a chance! All through those six years of work I had saved money from sales at the Norwich Art Circle, year after year. I cycled to Earsham, met the owner, and bought the place and freehold for fifty pounds.

I don't remember being at all elated as a property owner; it all happened as a matter of course—everything being possible then.

Mr. Bedwell, a quiet, thoughtful man with a moustache and rather red nose, did all the alterations, which only amounted to a skylight on the north side and a tortoise stove with pipe and chimney, and one eventful day I walked on that thick, firm, boarded floor of my new studio.

Easels, given me by Mr. Reeve at Norwich Museum (one belonging to an old artist of the Norwich School), came down. A set of old elm-wood chairs with a gate-leg table furnished it and, as happens to such places, canvases, portfolios, sketches, brushes and paints all became part of it, and gave it the studio air. I can remember putting tall teasels in a brown jar, which remained there until I left it six years later.





Left: Osmond Tearle as the hunchback in "Richard III".  
Right: Laurence Irving as Svengali (Theatre Royal, Norwich).



Left: Father Christmas, in "The Silver King," right, is the Silver King himself (Theatre Royal, Norwich).  
Right: A poster design.



*Design which won the Gold Medal at the Poster Academy at the Crystal Palace in 1899.*

## STILL WORKING FOR CALEYS

**B**EING cut off from other artists, I was at times lonely. Listless moments came when I sat there, disinclined or unable to work, hearing a waggon of hay pass by, or the ring of the anvil, or sounds and voices in the village. I was twenty. The only capital I possessed in the world, my savings, dwindled fast, and began to disappear as my carpenter's shop grew into a studio, and although I lived at home for a while, I could not exist on what I might chance to sell. Therefore I continued to do poster designs and advertising work.

Much of this was for my staunch old friend, Shaw Tomkins, who, being keen on a deal, often cut me down to a low figure for designs for cracker-box tops. Why so generous and merry a soul got such fun out of this I can't say; but when I stood out for my figure, explaining how difficult it was to think of original designs, he would roar with laughter and accuse me of being too sharp! In the end we agreed on fifty shillings for each design—there were dozens to do. Ten came to twenty-five pounds—a lot of money then.

Tomkins would pay a flying visit from Norwich. At Harleston station I met him with a horse and trap and drove him to Mendham. There in the studio we haggled over shillings. Finally he always bought a water-colour or two and sketches, which healed the wound of the hard business deal, and next day would find me hard at it before a sloping easel, with designs thick on the floor around. These were done in three colours and black outline as a rule. But what names the crackers were given! Caley's Primrose Crackers, Caley's Double Violet Crackers, Caley's Long and Short Crackers, Classic Crackers, Seashore Crackers, Deep-sea Crackers. They were endless: all the better for trade.

Many people made money through these designs. I seemed to create with ease; but was this really so? I look back, and know that it was all hard work, which had to be done so that I could live and paint. Why painting should have been the aim, and why I used all this energy so that I could set a palette and paint in oils in the sun and wind, beset by all the distractions of out-of-door work, I do not know. Yet I went on for some years with poster work—and liked doing it—in between my more ambitious aspirations.

What was really difficult was the job of changing over—stepping out of one method of work and into another entirely different. It was disturbing to get out of a groove, to clear the floor and move things for starting a poster, getting out charcoal, grinding powder-colours on the stone slab. Who but artists—lonely men in one sense—can ever know what this means? It would be as bad for the writer who in the midst of a novel had at last to stop and write journalistic columns, or for an actor manager to put on pantomime! All who are artists will understand. The column may become interesting; but you have to displace and move all your former people and thoughts in the unfinished story laid by, and begin reversing the mind until they are eclipsed.

Intermittently Colman's blue or starch, or Caley's chocolate, took their turn with what I was longing to do, and later I accepted a retaining fee from a large printing-house in London which took me to town often enough to become a member of the Langham Sketch Club in All Souls' Place.

This side line, bringing riches with it, went on apace, so that I continued dipping into my imagination, always hoping and believing there would be one more idea—even as when a jar of pickled shallots is fast shrinking we expect to prong yet one more with the fork.

Gradually, through the Norwich Art Circle and Boswells, a firm of art dealers in that city, my pictures became known and were sold at moderate prices.

Jim Boswell said, "Sell it and paint another."

"Quite right, quite right," said his thoughtful and more refined brother Sam. "Don't do pot-boilers."

So spake a brother artist. Temptations to make money were worse than temptations to play.

Boswell's sold antiques and pictures, mostly of the Norwich School, which were hung in a very good top lit gallery. Upstairs was a room full of bottles, brushes and varnish, where old pictures were restored by an expert named Whiting. If I was in Norwich on a visit, and so inclined, in the absence of Mr. Whiting, I painted pictures of all kinds in that room, and Boswell bought them for a few guineas. These were pictures of knaves and thieves, of ghosts and folk with lanterns in the snow. One night I saw "She Stoops to Conquer", so my pictures were of Miss Hardcastle and Tony Lumpkin. I saw "The School for Scandal", and painted Lady Teazle.

A part of my inconsistent mind was soaked in the costume and foppery of that period. I loved painting three-cornered hats and wigs and women with powdered hair. This making of such

pictures for golden sovereigns to spend was, I suppose, a vicious habit, but I not only did this, I was attracted by a fair-haired girl in the shop who could sing, and would often trill like a bird, playing her own accompaniments on a piano standing among chairs, china, tables and pictures. (This would only happen if the Boswells were away.) The manager of the shop—Henry we called him—liked a good song, too, and more than once a ringing top note ended with the entrance of a customer.

That shop became familiar, for each year my pictures were framed and sent to the Academy from there, and when framed and ready for approval, a small set of would-be connoisseurs and friends would speak their minds about them and wish me luck. Otherwise I kept the business dark, for I dreaded being rejected and out!

I make the space here because when I saw the last sentence written: how *I dreaded being out* of the Academy—not hung, in fact—it looked a bald statement. It gave no hint whatever of those feelings which possessed me when I got the rejection notices, coming as they did after weeks of waiting there in the country. Being old and hardened now, and too familiar with all that happens behind those sacred doors of the Royal Academy, I find it beyond my pen to put in words, perhaps not only for myself but for other artists, the discordance, the jolt, the shock, the pause in life on seeing the notice that such-and-such a work was out.

## CHAPTER XV

### MY DOG FRIDAY

**M**Y old terrier, "Friday", curled up in the armchair by the hearth, couldn't be told. If only he could have understood and have known my thoughts he would have wagged his tail and sympathised, for wasn't he always with me when I painted the pictures, in the studio or out of doors—hunting rats, if by the river? What labour, what scraping went on in the bank! Now he tore up roots with his teeth, his face plastered with earth, and if a larger piece of soil were thrown into the water by his efforts, he stopped to turn and to see if it were the rat.

Suddenly the real plop came, and in went Friday with a plunge.—Yes, that old dog would have been sorry, although I often believed he used me as company for himself. Dogs love to go out sketching with artists. It gives them an excuse for a pleasant day out—they'd never go alone. As I couldn't tell it to Friday, I wasn't going to tell it to any human. Sometimes it was the picture I had made first in my list—we could send six in those days—the one I had worked on through a summer; the one which I had hoped would attract attention and be well placed.

I try, sitting calmly concentrating, to live one of those mornings again. I find I am running my hand through my hair, scratching my head. (Why do people scratch their heads?) And now voices sound in the village; an old crow, whose note I know so well, is cawing away at the foot of the hill—Withypool Hill—and to-day, 21st August, 1944, is the day of days here—Withypool Races—and I'm one of the judges.

To think I'm to be a judge at a race meeting! Why, instead of concentrating on far-away events in my artist's life, am I allowing distractions of the moment to interfere? No wonder Carlyle had that room with its double walls at the top of his house in Chelsea!

I force myself to shut out the cawing crow and the coming races and get back to the breakfast table in Shearing's Farm, Mendham, where I stood asking myself why a particular picture wasn't hung. I can now see even the pattern of the covering on the armchair in which Friday was curled up.

Instead of four pictures in that year, I had only two. These happenings hurt at the time; and for that short space everything

stood still. The slow tick of the tall clock in the corner—the black japanned grandfather with the raised lacquer work, bought at Lavenham—went on and on through the pause with its steady beat. I stared at the road and fence outside through the window. I am not ashamed to say that I could have wept at the thought of all the wasted efforts—the carrying out of the canvas, the setting it up day after day, getting the models, wrestling with composition and the uncertain English climate. Alas, those lost efforts! I would soon be seeing them again with a fresh eye, on their return from their adventures, marked with that evil white chalked X or D, meaning “rejected” or “doubtful”. In the meantime, let’s tell the old dog there are two in!

But Friday didn’t care about that; he’d rather have a piece of bread rubbed in the bacon-fat on the dish, bless his heart. Besides, he only used me for his own amusement, and lay in the studio by the fire because it was warm—dreaming of rats which he drove out of their holes into the water, leaving naught but a chain of bubbles behind. His dreams would take him through these scenes again. He tried to bark, his feet quivering as he ran in his sleep. His master all the while was losing time on something that would not come right—foolish fellow! leave it. Ah, why didn’t I leave it? Why go on? Best to put it away if you can. Friday’s dog-dreams would vanish, and he would awake, get up, stretch, shake himself and stand looking at me until I looked at him; then he wagged that tail of his and twisted his hind part round and went to the door, telling me it was time to stop.

I wasn’t always wise enough, and much too obstinate to stop; and what I was painting would be scraped out next morning. I should have listened to Friday. Poor Friday! I believe the water-colour which my mother had of him in her Norwich home is far better than I could do to-day. Something has left me since we two kept company in that carpenter’s-shop studio long ago.

I glance back to where I said that something has left me since my dog Friday and I kept company in the carpenter’s-shop studio fifty years ago. This is true in my own case.

We each should know our own make-up. Some may pretend they don’t, but they must, surely. I admit I can’t always understand why moods come: why I want to work and why I don’t; why I’m depressed; why I’m happy. But no doubt exists now in my mind about being able to set to and draw and invent any kind of thing as I used to do, or begin on canvases beset with difficulties. Have I grown cunning? Am I an old stager who doesn’t want to go into the collar?

To sit down at an easel in a tree-shadow and paint a landscape is never easy, but it is a comfortable manner of painting. Many happy moments fly too fast when the artist finds his "spot". It is another thing when, in the studio, with your original sketch, your studies, your notes, you find yourself at work on a large canvas, trying to make something out of all you know.

Perhaps now "the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought", or it may be that the temptation to ride off on a fine day into these moors besets me, and I give in with the thought, "It's such a beautiful day—there will be others to work in. I've worked hard; mayn't I play now?" Were we meant always to go on working? I know only too well that in this wild, unspoilt country, all looking as it did centuries ago, I can take a horse and ride, or a long stick and walk away to some steep, bracken-grown combe and lie down below all day on the close turf and hear the music of a stream running over the stones. Since I shall never know why I am here, so I shall never know when my time is best spent.

Working against the climate through the seasons wears an artist out. That is why artists should be forgiven for all the exaggerated stories told of them. No indulgence in pleasures of all kinds can be too well-deserved a reward, or can recoup the wearied soul of the painter, whether he loses or wins the struggle. He deserves a jolly dinner if he wins and needs a jollier one if he loses.

Speaking of dinners, of all the foolish things I ever did, none was worse than when, after winning the gold medal at the Poster Academy at the Crystal Palace in 1899, I sold it to my friend, Sam Boswell, for six sovereigns, and spent the money the same night on a dinner. Why—oh why did I do that? To this day I don't know if it was melted down or not, for it was a genuine heavy gold medal.

I heard the news of my success long before I got the medal. It was read to me by a nurse in a nursing-home in Norwich, when recovering from an operation after losing the sight of my right eye. She suddenly found the news in *The Morning Post*, and came rushing up in starched cap and apron and read all about it to me. I couldn't believe it! I had forgotten that I had sent up the three designs to the Exhibition. My accident, with its trouble and suspense, had put it out of my head. Months afterwards, the medal arrived as unexpectedly as the first news. I should never have sold it. It was as bad as selling a horse, which I hate doing; for I can safely say that, with all the horses I've owned, I only committed the sin four times.



## WINGFIELD CHURCH AND COMMON

I SEEM to be settled in this summer-house on the top lawn. I write to the smell of drying lavender, which lies on sacks of horse-food stored here—a war starvation substitute for oat-husks. It is a blessing to know that on Exmoor real oats can be bought. Strong scents of phlox grown in masses of pink and white come through doors and windows. Such a breezy, bright morning, with clouds sailing over Withypool Hill opposite, is fatal to me, for I must be off on a horse. There are no flies on days like this.

Am I losing hold on Suffolk and Norfolk? Is this wild country casting its net over me? Exmoor, with its storms of “untimely violence” and its gales of wind and rain, can change its face and smile, resuming “God’s gentle, sleeping peace,” so that in the end everybody would stay if they could, or come again as they do.

How save myself? Suddenly I think of Wingfield Common in Suffolk with the old castle standing out of the moat, and the yellow-washed front of an ancient house built inside its walls, where I used to eat the best home-cured ham in the world.

Wingfield church lies beyond the wide common; its low, massive, flint-built, grey-buttressed tower showing above trees. On the south side, facing the road, is an ancient, brown-tiled and buff-washed farmhouse, known as the College. This church always attracted us as boys. Full of Sir Walter Scott, we often drove over with our mother to see the tombs of the De la Poles. The armoured knights lying there with their wives beside them quickened our imaginations already steeped in *Ivanhoe*. One pair, on a high tomb, were carved in alabaster and scarred over with the initials of long-dead villagers and visitors. The effigies on an older tomb were of oak, painted over, and these, as I watched them then and in later years, always expressed a quiet resignation—to the long sleep which ended the struggle, the turmoil. “Only,” says Froude, “among the aisles of the cathedral, some faint conceptions float before us of what these men were when they were alive.” The silent spell of the church, the grey age of it all, brought me to a momentary, wondering standstill, with scarce an outside sound to counteract its hold upon me.

There were two objects for what I called my Wingfield rides.

The first—a gallop round the Common; the second—a visit to the church. After the gallop, and a call on a caravan-dweller living on the green, I made for my second and real object. Leaving my horse at the inn stable near the church, I went in through the heavy oak door. I stood there near the bottom of the nave, always falling again under the spell of its stillness—mustiness—a strange feeling of everything ageing—passing away into decay and oblivion.

Those rides across the common in later years seem as remote to me as the earlier visits when we drove there, and why Wingfield should have come into my mind as I write here in the middle of Exmoor, or why it should come back at this particular time, is one of those mysteries of the working of the mind never accounted for. And the old moated castle, where I feasted with Mr. Groom and his sons and daughters, all dovetail in like the parts of a puzzle out of a box, carrying my thoughts far away to sketching-grounds of the past, and how I rode there to supper at the farmhouse inside the castle walls and drank the best and mellowest home-brewed beer. My pen goes too fast; these doings all happened years later, and must take their turn.

To my story. That first studio at Mendham was large and well-lit. From the windows on the north side I saw the blacksmith at work in his garden. Sketches and studies hung on the walls and stood around on the floor.

There was a tall, canvas-covered screen near the door, and on this I had painted a most beautiful Oliver Goldsmith girl in a large hat and striped gown. One day, when the Boswells came over from Norwich to buy, we had a merry lunch-party at Harleston Swan, with old vintage port to follow, which so affected the buyers and salesman, that before the deals ended, my girl was cut off the screen, rolled up and taken away in the waggonette in which the party went to the station. They were good days. There was I, a provincial, youthful artist, with good patrons and jolly dealers who gave me lunch, made us all merry, and bought pictures and took them away in a waggonette, smoking large cigars and waving good-bye. It is unbelievable, yet it happened again and again.

Sometimes the party was increased by the presence of one or two Norwich artists. There was Savile Flint, who dressed in home-spuns, stockings and spats over shiny, brown boots, and who had a watery eye, a rubicund face and nose, and sandy moustache. He enjoyed port and got the gout.

Edward Elliot, who lived with a sister at Acle, and exhibited

at the Academy and told stories, was another. He was contemporary with La Thangue, Forbes and Swann, and took snuff and liked to get merry.

Bagge-Scott, the President of the Norwich Art Circle, once came. Being the best artist that Norwich had seen since Cotman, like him, he was poor. He had studied in Holland, and knew all about tone. His best picture—a long-shaped canvas of a tug pulling barges on the Scheldt—was, without doubt, a masterpiece of tones in grey. It hung in a well-lit dining-room of a friend's house where I often stayed, and it drew attention at once, with the massing of the barges against the pale, early sunset and grey, scudding clouds. I never saw an expanse of leaden, wind-swept waters painted so well. The artist spent much time on it and, I believe, sold it for fifty pounds. No wonder he was pale, bitter and needy. But when he came to a Swan luncheon he cheered up and chirped away and was full of fun. His end, sometime after this period, was sad. He died in poverty. These companions have all passed out long ago. I was the youth of the gatherings.

The Swan Hotel was a large, mellow, brick-fronted, early Georgian house, with a famous scrolled ironwork sign hanging over the street. The place gave the impression of all the most perfect and best being within; and it was. You passed under a tall archway and through a door on the right which led into the cosy, comfortable bar-parlour. A round Queen Anne table, polished like a mirror, standing in the centre, was a feature of the room, and made it. Shelves, with rows of bottles and decanters of all kinds, were around the walls. The bar itself stood across the space of a Georgian bow-window looking into the yard. A perfect window, and a perfect background to whichever of the daughters was serving in the bar. It would be either Sally, a blonde with almost white hair, or Rachael, the eldest. Nelly, the middle one, the Martha, was in the kitchen when a party like ours was in progress. What cooking! All was perfection, from the white linen and old silver to the cut-glass decanters full of port.

When I tired of evenings in the country I rode up to the Swan for a convivial. The same faces were there each night. There was the Major. There was the Bank Manager, who sang "True, true till death". There was the local veterinary, the auctioneer, an ironmonger, a chemist and a farmer or two, and if the mood came over us we all trooped up the stairs to sing, for each had his own particular song. We sang to the accompaniment of dear Sally.

One night, going home at a merry trot, singing "Landlord, fill the flowing bowl", my steed shied at the full moon reflected in a puddle of water, and left me sitting in the road. But my glad song went on as I did the remainder of the journey on foot, as jolly as ever, and found the riderless, foolish mare waiting outside her stable. Happy, pleasant, far-off days!

## CHAPTER XVII

### MANORIAL FAMILIES OF SUFFOLK

THIS morning brought me one letter among the rest which sent me sharply back into the past beyond where I am now arrived at. It came from one who long ago was a master at my old school, and who edits *The Framlinghamian*, the school magazine. He is much impressed, and so full of my recent doings that he means to start to write columns about me. Now he is asking for a photograph to use with his columns.

Little did I think when he used to thrash me that I should ever become Sir Alfred, or that he would end a letter with, "A school doesn't have a P.R.A. every day of the week". It's a wonder I ever went on drawing there at all. I have already told of being caned for drawing in preparation.

His letter from Framlingham reminds me not only of its old castle and church and my school days, but also of many journeys there with artist friends long since. It lies in the heart of Suffolk, and the castle is one of my places of call. The grey outer walls still stand, surrounded by a deep, dried-up moat or fosse. The Tudor princess, later Queen Mary, fled to Framlingham. Ancient events like that have always baffled my imagination. I have tried to picture those scenes, the mode of travel, the arrival and all the rest.

The church, too, like that at Wingfield, had tombs with effigies of armoured lords and their wives, but it had not that same impenetrable, brooding silence, the silence of an ancient church, broken only by the slow ticking of the clock in the tower above.

The seasons bring the flowers again,  
And bring the firstling to the flock;  
And in the dusk of thee, the clock  
Beats out the little lives of men.

Those Suffolk journeys were made to show some artist friend or other what Suffolk was like and to justify my loyalty and pride in the old places. This loyalty was badly shaken here on Exmoor only last week-end, when a Somerset friend, the High Sheriff, came to stay. In the most perfect weather, we wandered on the moors round Larkbarrow. Then, as the Sheriff lost his pocket-book holding his identity card, notes and all sorts of important documents, we spent the whole of Sunday retracing our steps.

His high office took him away on Monday, and so with three mounted friends and the shepherd from Tom's Hill I made yet another search. All we discovered was a dead and decaying Exmoor pony that had been hit by long-range shell-fire from American artillery, who have been using the moors in this year, 1944.

That fruitless search over country I had not seen for years did shake my belief in East Anglia. As we looked around the horizon, we saw only wide stretches of moorland—no sign of fields of any kind, only here and there a wall climbing a far slope, enclosing Hayes or Oare Manor Allotment. Long, unbroken, peaceful lines of ancient moorland curved and sloped down into hidden combes in fold after fold.

I believe that between Brendon, Larkbarrow and Oare, Exmoor is at its best. On such days, with slow-moving clouds casting purple shadows, the moor brings peace to the soul. These far-stretching, unspoilt solitudes defy the jerry-builder and speculator, and are the last refuge from the tarmac, from the unwanted, though fast-growing built-up areas which are swallowing coast-lines and counties. As we realise what is happening and become hopelessly aware of the noise of the car and aeroplane, then we realise, more and more, why people drift to the West.

Suffolk was beautiful in my youth. Modern conditions are spoiling a lot of it now. What is worse than a wide motor road, with its ceaseless roar of traffic day and night? Another sad happening there is the passing of the elms from the elm disease. I revelled in the shapes of elms which grew in fields and lanes when I was young.

I recall a by-road, far away between Ipswich and Framlingham, where there stood (they may yet stand) the most magnificent elms, on the brow of a hill by one of those old, gabled farms so common in Suffolk. To call it a brow is giving this its right name. It was the home pasture, and each great tree, with its gnarled trunk, stood in the right place, and had grown into such shape and design and wonderful massing that whoever was with me in the car always had to get out and be taken to view the whole from different angles.

The only way to paint such trees, such spots, would be from a caravan—for the artist can seldom find lodgings where he wishes to work. I recollect some elms on the turn of a road far into High Suffolk which I determined to paint. One day, when my old friend Edmund Gwenn, the actor, was staying with me, I took him in the car to fulfil my purpose. As I sat there in the back seat working at a water-colour, Gwenn's head fell on my left shoulder and he snored gently, peacefully as a child.

Suffolk is my native county. Early ancestors of our family held the manors of Nedging and Semer in the beautiful country near Chelsworth, my favourite village, a place of all places to paint. Here are extracts from *Suffolk Manorial Families*, beginning with two brothers Olyver and Anthonye de Munnines or Moonninges, of an ancient French house in Poitiers, both taken prisoner at Agincourt in 1415:

“Olyver de Munnines, second sonne taken prysonner at ye Battell of Agincort with his brother Anthonye and dyurs gen’: of ffraunce. Came into Englande in ye third yeare of Kinge Hen’: ye 5th Ano D’ni: 1415, haveing sworne fealtye to ye Kinge and p’miseing to serve faythfully under him in all his ffrenche warres; he receiued his pardon and lib’tie.” (Here follows something about a coat of arms, etc.)

“He was after slayne at ye battell of Vernoille, in Perche undr Kinge Henry ye 6th in Ano 2do ipiu’s regni ano Dni, 1424.”

A description of Anthony de Moonninges 1st fils follows:

“Taken pryssonner with his brother at ye Battell of Agincort was w’th many others brought into England, where swearing to serve ye Kinge in all ye ffrenche warres he was ransomed and set at lib’ty.”

Here follows a description of coat of arms.

“In ye 7th yeare of Kinge Hen: ye 6th Ano. Dni: 1428 he served at ye seige of Orleans vndr Will’m Delapoole then lieutenant of that seige after he was taken pryssonner with ye said Will’m Delapoole, Erle of Suff: At Jargeaux at length groweing old haveinge followed the Erle in all ye Kinges warres in ffraunce, he left his son Henry, whom he had trayned up in his place and soe dyed.”

More of a later Henry de Moonines:

“dwelling as a farmer at Nedging, being well trayned up in his youth, and of comely stature and com’endable partes by reason yt all ye Delapooles landes were giuen to Charles Brandon, Viscount Lysle, became knowne to Charles Brandon and was enterteyned into his service, whoe beinge once made Duke of Suff: ffor ye skylle wch ye said Henry had in songe and musycke, he made ye said Henry Superintendante of his Chappell and for yt ye said Henry was skylfull in ye ffrenche tongue wth good experience and discretion; for imploymt the Duke imployed ye said Henry in sondry messuages into ffraunce attendeing upon ye Duke when he fetched hoame into Englande Mary ye ffraunche Queene in ye 7th yeare of King Henry ye 8th Ano d’ni: 1515. After yt for his fidelitie and longe service, he made vnto Thomas the son of ye said Henry a lease of ye Manor of Nedging for ye tearme of 80 yeares.”

Here is a further extract:

“This family is very antient. They were of Monkes Ely and of Nedging, but have long since almost worne out. The most eminent place in Preston church is given to the coat of this family; yet I knowe none of any very great estate of that name in Suff: this yeare 1659.”

So writes Candler in his list ("Tanner MS." Lib. Bodleian, 226) of

"the names and armes of sundry of the gentlemen of chiefest account in the County of Suff: as their coates were set vp by Robert Reice Esq., (a most accomlisht gentleman) in the church windowes of Preston in Suff., about the latter end of the reigne of K. James or the beginning of the reigne of K Charles."

From all this it appears that my true name should be Sir Alfred de Munnines—or de Mooninges.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DOCTOR'S WHITE PONY

I STARTED out in my carpenter's shop and studio in 1898, long before the days of mechanical farming. Unsightly rows of poorly-designed, highly-rented Council cottages had not appeared. In spite of bad times and low prices, land was being farmed in the right way, with farmyard manure. Few farms were without a flock of sheep.

Farm-workers ploughed, dug drains, tended their horses, stock and sheep; wearing clothes in harmony with the soil. Their costume, invariably, was a felt or cloth hat, stained, weather-worn and shaped according to the dash or style of the man. A neckerchief or scarf was worn with a sleeved waistcoat, now a thing of the past, and always corduroy trousers tied below the knee with string. A horseman might have breeches and gaiters of the same stuff, yet in cut and shape these had no relation to the sagging, tight-at-the-knee sort of thing we see to-day. Gray's line in the "Elegy" describes them: "How jocund did they drive their team afield". Some were more dandified than others, with an extra turn on Sundays, when, in black broadcloth or velvet, individuality had its chance in the cut even of a pocket or sleeve.

Why I lost my chance then of picture-making with these splendid figures is easily explained. They were all around one, a common sight on every farm. Only now does an artist realise what is gone. No more sleeved waistcoats. No more of those jaunty-looking, nattily-dressed men with their waggon-teams of four and their brass-bound whips, going to distant mills with wheat after harvest. I was contemporary with it all and saw it as part of life. I wish now that I had made more pictures of them before the costume disappeared.

I began with farm sales, horse fairs, even ploughing; but as labourers were always at work, and horses, too, I had difficulty in painting pictures of them all the time. My pattern of life was being weaved by circumstances, one of which looms large—the loan of a white pony as a model.

Our doctor, George Candler, who became one of my dearest friends, lived at Harleston, and seeing my efforts with the ponies at home, he offered to lend me this fat, white favourite belonging

to his wife. The pony came to live at Mendham, a home of plenty, and was soon standing for me all day and every day. There was no asking for him or waiting until he was not in use. I saw him on a grey day feeding in the orchard, with the river and dark clumps of rushes and a distant level horizon behind him. I was so moved at what I saw that I was quickly back with a boy, my paints and easel, working at a canvas. We put oats and bran on the grass in driblets to keep him feeding, and be it more than forty years ago, I remember the pleasure of painting that day on a piece of perfect canvas—a kind I had never used before. Where and when I got that canvas, I cannot remember.

The colouring was all in tones of green and grey. A river does, without a doubt, make a place. Our home was by the river, and with a river you can paint. Only think of a white pony feeding two yards away from the rush-grown pool by the flood-gates, the grey water showing under its belly, and young, grey-green osiers to the left. I'd give a lot to have just the same sort of place and pony now.

Oh for a river flowing through one's premises as it did there at home! A boat on it, a girl resting on the oars—the reflections—the farther bank, with broad, wild-rhubarb leaves in full growth crowding one over the other—the fall of the green weeping-ash bough trailing in the water! The sound of the mill! All makes me long to be back once more in those days, with flocks of ducks on the water, and Notley, in white, dusty clothes, throwing scuppets of maize or barley into the shallows, the ducks driving across the surface in a mad rush of flapping wings and loud quacking.

But to my story. The white pony had a name, but for the life of me I cannot remember it. His mane and tail were thick and like silk, and his head was beautiful. At last I was involved, entangled in the magic of his tones. I was coming to grips with a subject at last.

The two cousins—Nina and Cecil—were staying with us again. Someone always seemed to be staying. Nina was with the pony, feeding it from a sieve of corn. She was wearing just such a blue overall as in the boat picture, with an old stocking cap. Blue dappled shadows of an apple-tree fell across the pony's back and quarters. Orchard trees in the background cast shadows on the grass. Could I but snatch this picture—sustain the effort—put down what I saw! What a pattern it made and what a hopeless resolve was mine! This I soon discovered as the days went on. Then, being sentimental and knowing no better, I put Cecil on the pony's back and two other ponies in the background looking



*Drawing of Laurence Irving as Svengali  
(Theatre Royal, Norwich).*



*Left: Trilby (Theatre Royal, Norwich).*



*Right: Another poster design which gained a Silver Medal for me at the Crystal Palace in 1899.*

# CALEY'S CHOCOLATES

NORWICH  
& LONDON

TRADE MARK



44" x 34"

"I started again on large poster designs of lovely girls in large hats. . . ."

# CALEY'S CHOCOLATES

NORWICH  
& LONDON



TRADE MARK



"... for Caley's chocolates. My model was a dark-eyed attractive cousin."  
See page 103.

on—and believe me or not, I gave it an Academy title—"An Old Favourite".

To interpret—to make the illusion of the shadows patterned upon grass—is a problem for the expert. It became a desperate task for me. Finally, I made water-colour studies of those shadows, and before the picture was finished, the smell of September days in orchards, with here and there a yellow leaf lying in the grass, was already beginning—and the doctor's wife wanted the pony back.

I never learned how cold, or how mauve, or warm were the moving shadows on that white pony.

This picture was hung the following year with others, and when I last saw it, in the retrospective exhibition at Norwich a few years ago, with its glaring faults, I passed again through those daily struggles, passage by passage, even to the signature.

At that time it was La Thangue who showed the beauties of sunlight; and his way of life was to keep on with his subjects at hand, there at Graffham, day by day, through the seasons. No better pictures of country life, painted in the open air, were being done then. This is only my opinion. A painting of geese, coming through speckled light and shade down to the water, was a masterpiece. It was bought for the MacCulloch collection, and has been shown somewhere since. His pictures of picking cider-apples or purple damsons, of gleaners in twilight or of a cider-press, were like no others in the Academy during those years; and when any of us talked of artists and their work, one would exclaim, "But what about La Thangue?" which started us off afresh.

One of his, in particular, "Cutting Bracken", is, I am thankful to say, still well hung in a famous home, the Guild-hall. It is a large, well-painted canvas. The long, low evening light, which the artist loved, slants across the picture and glows upon the bare arms of the youth. How often have I stood before this open-air achievement and sighed to be doing it like that!

Fresh discoveries of all that paint could do led me on. What joy there was in finding out and seeing colour—becoming aware of beauties in everything, beauties never seen before; and although I lazed away precious hours and sailed on the river in a new boat with a centre-board, I must have worked most of the time during that first free summer, for I lived in a painter's paradise.

Long after these days at home—just before the 1914 war—I used to meet La Thangue at the Chelsea Arts Club. He was unhappy about where to live, and wanted a change. He asked

me if I knew of a quiet, old-world village where he could live and find real country models; and although I knew what was in his mind, and told him of this place or that, he drifted on, and nothing happened. Again and again when we met in the club there was the same unsettled, unhappy look in his eye—the same question—and a tinge of sadness in his voice.

Things were altering. Folk were not wearing the same clothes. Boys were always at school, wearing ready-made suits, and no longer worked on the land in old patched-up trousers. Labourers were discarding corduroys, and old women were never seen in sun-bonnets.

He wanted a village among small farms,—cows on a common, children carrying wicker-covered jars of beer and great tea-baskets to the harvest-field. He wanted, too, a stream with ducks, thatched cottages and apple-trees. All this might be found in some far-away county, but where was he to live? Was there a house for himself, wife and chattels? A house with “mossed cottage trees”? Although young looking, age was gaining on La Thangue, and I believe he never found his spot.

How often have I been in the same quandary, passing sleepless nights, going through neighbourhoods I had known, with that same urge to find an arcadia of the painter's dreams? All the time life has gone on without a pause, while I still keep my village and its folk in mind, knowing I shall never find it. But of course it exists, without a doubt—with a lovely house for myself, my wife and my chattels—only, someone else lives in that house, and often enough it is the parson!

Lovely homes in lovely surroundings are never for sale, unless they be mansions from which unhappy owners have been driven by stupid taxation. If a family own one of these beautiful English homes, why they should be taxed out of it because of its size is beyond my understanding.

Environment is everything. All comes under its spell. Mine was more than I could wish for at home, with country folk in the right clothes, horses, cattle, a river, millpool and ducks. For years these surroundings kept me busy, and yet so discontented did I become that it was only when I returned from some journey or stay in another place that I saw it with a fresh eye, beginning fresh work. So it will always be.

## NORFOLK BROADS

THAT summer I had my first sight of the Norfolk Broads, with Shaw Tomkins and a party. The wherry *Triumph* we were on belonged to a friend who bought pictures. We started from Wroxham. A warm August wind and moving clouds across the sky will always remind me of my first and last weeks on the Broads. In 1909 a launch was a rare thing. Everybody sailed, and got to Wroxham, Horning or Acle by train—often by horse-conveyance.

This was a world apart—a country of vast skies and distances. Breezes tossed and rustled grey-green reed-beds bordering river banks, driving the blue surface into waves. Trading-wherries, low in the water, with tall black sails, slid by. White-sailed yachts and dinghies passed, with waves lapping against the prow, heeling over to the stronger gusts of wind, and there was always that same dry, rustling sound of the reeds. At night—lying perhaps at Irstead Shoals—a full moon coming up in the sky, and mists rising on the water, a perfect peace would reign that defies description. Such nights as these, following days of happy sailing, were my first taste of that enchantment.

Here is the story of my very last visit to the Norfolk Broads in the 1920's. Just such a peace had fallen on Ranworth Broad; a mellow harvest moon rose above the mist in a sky, which was—and yet wasn't—purple. Cosy lights shone out from anchored yachts and large white motor-launches where people were supping or having a quiet smoke. Whoever they were, this calm moonlight must have possessed their souls, and silence reigned supreme. My host—a man who had made piles of money—wanted to try out a new speed-boat. "For God's sake," said I, "not on such a night." But he had gone, leaving a colossal wake, stirring up the stench of a thousand years of decayed vegetation and other matter. In the misty moonlight the scene of turmoil with pitching yachts, tossing lights and reflections was like Turner's picture of "A Storm at Sea", or "The Shipwreck". Shouts and curses came across the broad, which had never suffered such a stirring up since the beginning of creation.

Paintings of that first trip still hang in my mother's home in Norwich, and all sorts of conflicting thoughts take possession of

me as I face them on the wall. One, of the wherry *Triumph*, with coloured rugs and blankets out on deck airing in the sun, takes me back to feasts of roast duck, saddles of mutton, Yarmouth bloaters, and songs to a piano. How much jollier, how much better, than listening, as now, to precious souls hawhawing, tittering, excusing themselves and passing on to the next Brains Trust question! Gramophones had not even started in days of the flowing sail and lapping wave.

Without a car—without the telephone—I arranged matters so that with my oils, water-colours, canvases, easel and luggage complete, I arrived at Acle on that first broadland trip at the very hour of setting out. Yet in later days of telephoning, and with a car to take me there, my painting things were often left behind in neglect. Now I regret such opportunities, foolishly lost! Alas! I was growing too fond of play, too mixed up with jolly friends and racing at regattas. In fact, I was soon in the swim of it all.

Having joined the Yare and Bure Sailing Club, there was always the comfortable, well-supplied Club Houseboat. Canvas chairs were on the deck. Summery-looking ladies moved about, and the men were in the usual white duck trousers, navy-blue jackets, brass buttons and peaked caps—all looking very red in the face, very jovial and very nautical. Down below there were long luncheon-tables and white linen, lobster salads and every kind of wonderful cold food and drink, from champagne to draught ale.

I wonder if that same dark-blue, roomy, comfortable old craft still floats, and where she is moored. She was the most desirable, satisfying home of plenty that ever floated on those waters. What lunches were ordered and eaten! What long iced drinks we sipped through straws as we sat watching the crowded starts in regattas on narrow rivers!

There indeed were pictures for the artist. A wide sky with distant horizon with only willows to break it, unless it were on a broad like Wroxham, where belts of far-off woodlands stretched along the skyline, or at Barton, with its church-tower standing among trees on the low uplands. If it were a regatta, scores of craft, gay with flags and bunting, lined either side of the river for half a mile and more, and the competing yachts, packed under massed white canvas, jockeyed for starts in a space that was almost unbelievable. Never was a more beautiful sight—and all so paintable and possible to do, because one could hire and use a houseboat as a studio. The spirit was willing, the flesh weak. After one regatta another followed at once, everyone sailing on next day to get a berth.



They were days of sun and wind, under skies of moving cloud, with the same soothing sounds of lapping water, rustling reeds and warbler's songs as we sailed by. If we were making tacks, the jib fluttered and cracked in the breeze as we came round, brushing the tall, broad belt of reeds along the bank. Who could hold to a sense of duty and paint under such blissful passage? Laziness held me in its spell—conscience took the wrong side—my painting was losing, my sailing, eating and drinking propensities winning. When young, there is always time ahead to do things, and we mean to seize the next opportunity. But how fascinating all that procrastination was, either in the *Bonito*—my friend Mackley's racing cruiser—or in some well-fitted house-boat or wherry, or even a centre-board dinghy. This last kind of sailing is briskest and best on a river.

For me such days surpass all days of racing either at Newmarket, Epsom, Sandown or Cheltenham. Here I must steady my flowing pen, uncontrolled as a sail flapping in the wind—for I do love racing. I love the interest created as the horses are led round after saddling up at Epsom. I love the sight from the members' stand, from the roar "They're off," to the terrific finish—not to mention the cornet-player who, year by year, always stood opposite and played the same tune when the silence came after the start: "Give peace, oh God, give peace again."

Yet if, by magic, I might be taken either to the Epsom Downs or Horning Ferry to-morrow, with guaranteed weather conditions, I don't know which I'd choose. I believe it would be Horning. Would it? Well, if it were on a good boat with jolly friends I'd say "Yes", and as soon as we had a tankard of bitter and got going, I'd forget the paddock scenes and the finish, knowing there would be the same scenes next year. Sitting here writing of broadland fun makes me long all the more for the sound of the breeze in the reeds and the chucking songs of warblers as we pass—sailing on, heeling over to the warm gusts of wind, with lapping water under the bow, a blessed feeling of pure contentment stealing all over one's body and into one's very soul.

Here I heave a sigh and wonder if, when the war is over, I'll ever have the sense to go back to those happy waters and work as well as play. Vain thoughts, vain hopes! I am forgetting the restless crowd who know that playground, and who will go back there, swamping reeded banks for miles with the wash of motor-launches and speed-boats. Now should be the time to go. Now—instead of foolishly watching the high, rounded Withypool Hill through the rain. No use! Procrastinating artist—there's a war on, and trains are crowded.

## HOW I LOST THE SIGHT OF ONE EYE

TO get back to Mendham. Lack of money kept me in that environment. Returning from past pleasures, I was soon restored to virtue at the sight of a horse grazing by the river—thinking, if only I could paint it, with grass, water, sky, *just as it looked!*

A boy in blue shirt, and cord trousers braced up to his armpits, his face shadowed under a wide, straw hat, feeding sandy and white fowls clustered about him. A boy fishing from the boat. An old man leading a mare and foal. Thus passed my first summer of independence. Then came a setback which happened just before my twenty-first birthday.

I was staying at Mulbarton, near Norwich, with an aunt and uncle who bred hackneys and farmed in a considerable way. One afternoon when I was out on the farm with a greyhound, a sheepdog and a hound puppy, they began chasing a hare. Two of the dogs went through a thorn fence into a field of swedes. The hound and I got to a hurdle in a corner. I lifted the heavy puppy over the hurdle, and as I dropped it to the ground, a spray of thorn, rebounding, struck my right eye. Sharp pain followed the blow. This was no mere flick against the eyeball. Soon I knew the worst. Standing among the swedes and shutting my left eye, I saw nothing but grey fog.

The local doctor came. He said it was only a blow, and told me to foment it and sent lotion. That night I sang "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo", and a Dan Leno song, "Ours is a 'appy 'ome", in make-up, at a concert in the village school, in aid of something to do with the Boer War. Friends pointed out afterwards that I poisoned the eye with grease-paint. Nothing of the kind. The clever Norwich specialist, Johnson Taylor, soon found what was wrong. A thorn had pierced the lens. The X-ray was young then. I went to London. Something was found in the eye. Things became worse. Johnson Taylor operated and got the speck of something out. For weeks I lay in a nursing-home attended by kind nurses and a cousin of my mother's, who stayed there and read to me all the time. She went through *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and other books.

My right eye was blinded for life. The left eye, which had been affected, began to settle with the blind eye, and when at last I was allowed to see light, and the time came to go home, I was sorry to leave that Norwich nursing-home—a tall, Georgian house in Surrey Street. What a happy Christmas it was, and what nice women the nurses were! One played the piano, and I sang to her accompaniment—my star turn was “The Blue Alsatian Mountains”.

I wasn't allowed to use my remaining eye for months afterwards, and when I began to do so I could not judge distances, and poured water on the cloth, missing the glass. I went to paint, and my brush either hit the canvas before I knew it was there, or was not touching it. Mostly it was the latter, and I found myself making stroke after stroke in the air, nearer and nearer, until I touched the painted surface. A long time elapsed before I became used to this, and even now I often make a stroke in the air which doesn't arrive on the canvas, or make another which lands too violently. This has been a handicap to me always, and cramps my style—shortens my stride, so to speak. What wouldn't I give to see with two eyes again!

We know that a painter often closes one eye to look at a thing. When studying at Julians in Paris, a few years later, students used to say it was a good fault to have one eye—I needn't close the other when I held the plumb-line before the model.

Johnson Taylor—a wizard, my saviour and benefactor—told me that I had had the most perfect sight before, and that with care the only eye would grow strong and stand the work. With journeying to town and the X-ray fees of that period, the expenses of the operation and the nursing-home for myself and dear old cousin Ellen, who read to me, all my savings were swept away.

Then I started again, on large poster designs of lovely girls in large hats, for Caley's chocolates. My models were a dark-eyed, attractive cousin and a friend, who came to stay. The cousin had beautiful arms and black hair, and was a flirt, and her name was May.

This work and much more of its kind soon brought the banking account up again to what I considered a safe sum; about seventy pounds. It seldom got higher or lower, and I felt rich with that amount in Barclay's at Harleston.

I picture that bank on the corner now. It was there I used to go as a youth with bags of gold and silver from my father. I see George Stebbings—Mr. Stebbings to me then—behind the shiny mahogany counter. His round nose shone, his gold eyeglasses

shone, his rather red moustaches swept out with a twist from the centre. He was almost beginning a double chin, and his face was rubicund and cheerful. A ring with a seal was on his finger, and altogether he was a proper, kindly, sprightly sort of country bank manager; and, as I've said before, he made appearances on certain nights at the Swan Hotel and, if encouraged, always sang "True, true till death".

"Well, Alfred my boy, and how's your father?"

"He's quite well, thank you, Mr. Stebbings."

"And your mother?"

"She's well, too."

Then, with the ring showing, he tilted up the money-bag, and golden sovereigns poured out on the counter, while those fingers of his deftly pushed the coins about and built them into piles. Bags of silver came next—large crown-pieces, florins, shillings—which his two sets of fingers worked into more piles. Then with a small brass shovel he scooped up all the piles of money and put it in drawers behind the counter.

This was my early remembrance of him, and as I banked there until I was well over forty—even after his retirement—my acquaintance grew from timid replies to his enquiries of "How's your father?" to a very jovial fellowship at the Swan years afterwards. I should add that when in his best shining moments, his attitude was with feet apart and thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. His appearance at a concert was superb. His pose was in the grand manner: starched shirt, starched tie, white gloved hands holding out the song at arm's length, his head thrown back, the light on his gold glasses and nose. His son grew up like the father, and played chess with me many an evening.

Long afterwards, in years of opulence, the son found me the only man-servant I've ever had, whose name was Cooper. Cooper called himself fifty, but was nearer seventy, and he loved answering the telephone, "Mr. Munnings's servant speaking". He was much given to a dark and weighty remark: "Watch Japan!"

About then—in the March after my accident, I believe it was—a new and independent phase began. The curtain rises. The scene: my new rooms in a farmhouse at the top corner of the village street, called Shearing's Farm. It was a typical Suffolk farmhouse, plastered and buff-washed, with a moss-grown, brown-tiled roof. It had a time-honoured and settled look about it. A row of green posts and chains stood the length of its road frontage. Stockyards, buildings and barns were in a square at



14" × 10½"

"Old Ted Ellis—a dealer's buyer who attended sales and who had a Curiosity Shop at the bottom of Grapes Hill, Norwich. . . . Many an evening developed into a carousal in the back room of the shop." Dated 1901. See page 107.



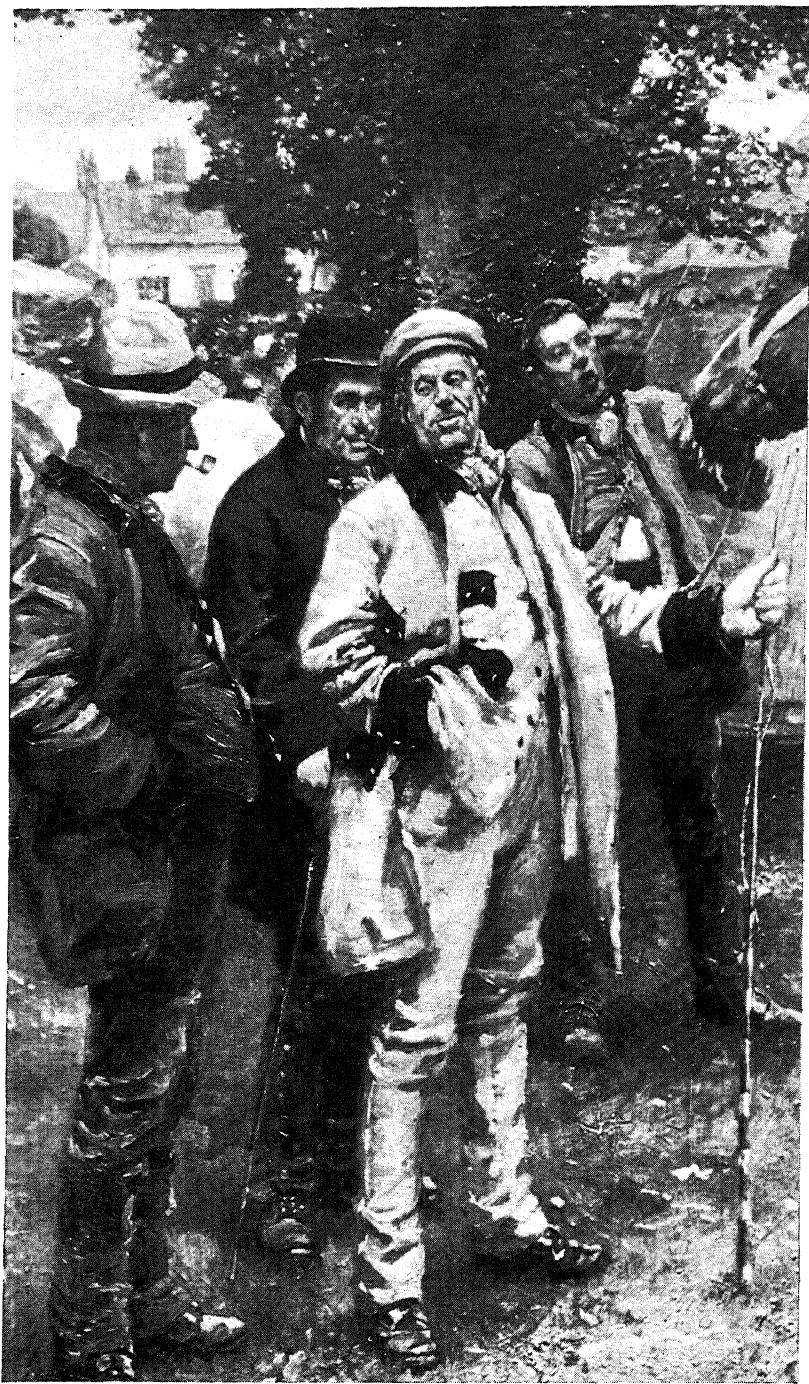
*My brother Charles, who died in his twenties in South Africa. Being the bad boy of the family, I called this "The Master Christian"—Marie Corelli's book being all the rage at that time.*





14" X 10"

"Old Ephraim Butcher—fat, short, bearded and sorrowful; pig-feeder and pig-killer, forever carrying two pails of pig-food on a yoke over his bowed shoulders." See page 111.



*Detail of picture of a Horse Fair in Norwich Art Gallery, bequeathed by Mr. "Dicky" Dowson.  
Models from left to right: Ned Aldous, Pod Aldous, Nobby Gray, Fred Gray.  
Painted when twenty-four.*



the back, and a high flint wall shut off the kitchen garden from the village.

In an account of old Mendham and the various farming families during the 'sixties, my mother has written about the Mrs. Shearing, widow of John Shearing, who lived at this farm, which took the name of Shearing's Farm from them. My mother's own story of Mrs. Shearing is as follows :

"Damaris Hill married Mr. John Shearing, and lived at the Street Farm over fifty years, the greater portion of which she was a widow. She was a remarkably clever, well-read woman of a fine, commanding presence, and managed the business herself. My father was her steward, but I have heard him say that his place was a sinecure for she knew more than he did, in fact was the only woman he knew capable of taking care of herself. She held great authority in the street and would quickly disperse a crowd of noisy men and boys if they congregated at the corner. She occasionally interfered in the quarrels of the gleaners. The women from the cottages in Mendham lane, where 'The Gables' now stands, would glean with the Redenhall people, and also come to Mendham, and the Mendham folk seized their corn and scattered it in the street, whereupon Mrs. Shearing came out of her house, compelled them to pick it all up, and restore it, saying the women should glean at Mendham even if she had to drive to every farm to see justice done. She was an excellent reciter, scenes from Shakespeare, 'Suffolk Gleaning', 'John and Mary's Courtship', 'Richard and Kate' being some of our favourites. Then she always had a new book or magazine if you went to see her.

"In the morning she wore a short skirt, leather buskins, a linsey jacket and a white hood while she fed her calves and poultry. By noon she was dressed for the day and drove out in a smart pony gig with white reins. She retired from farming about 1880 or 1881 and ended her days in Cambridge with her daughter, Mrs. Elborne."

Thus did my mother describe the former occupant of the house I lived in for six years. Her desultory diary was not written until long after, when she became more lonely with less to do. I remember her often telling me of Mrs. Shearing; and looking back to certain nights, when ghostly hands clutched and tugged my bedclothes, and when my dog, Joe, slept in my bedroom to keep the ghost away—and after reading this account—I wonder whether this might not have been Mrs. Shearing's ghost! What a title for a story! It may well have been Mrs. Shearing's ghost who was trying to get me out of her house!

Ten pounds a year was my rent for the two unfurnished rooms in Shearing's Farm. A horseman, Jonah Corbyn, his wife and daughter Jessie lived in the other end of the house. They were natives of the place, and Suffolk to the core. For six years I lived there, looked after and fed by Jonah's kind wife—for fifteen shillings a week all told—"inclusive", as the advertisements say.

She was neatness itself, with greying hair parted in the middle, a fresh complexion and placid smile. She talked little, and when she did she held her hands, one across the other, over the skirt of her very white apron—dear, kind soul. She was even glad to put up two queer student friends straight from Julian's atelier in Paris whom I had met on my first visit there, and did their washing, too! She was one in a thousand—ten thousand—and called me "Master Alfred". Her husband used to work on my grandmother's farm—Walsham Hall—then occupied by a Mr. Wharton, who also farmed Shearing's, which was what is known as an off hand farm, Corbyn being foreman in charge.

Through the front door, my room—the parlour of old—was on the right. Its low ceiling, with an oak beam across the middle, gave it a snugness which could calm and pacify the tortured mind, however sorely distressed—as mine was when pictures were rejected, or the bank balance low, or a letter didn't come from my latest flame.

An old Turkey carpet and rugs from Boswell's (in exchange for a picture) made a groundwork of cosiness for my collection of antiques. This began with a large, round gate-legged table in the middle, and it increased by leaps and bounds until it was completed by an old walnut veneered bureau bought in Bungay, and polished and cleaned by a man in the next village called Robertson, an ex-cabinet maker, now retired, who kept chickens in his orchard or pottered about and did odd jobs.

This bureau was a gem when done up, and inside, on the oak bottom of the well, was the name of its maker, written in ink. I can remember it as I sit here, although I have not seen it for years, and it now lies stored in nailed-up rooms with all its other furniture friends in my house at Dedham, occupied by troops. The writing ran thus: "Wm. Palleday—at ye Crown Inn—Aldermanbury—London. Cabinet Maker." Like all craftsmen of his day, Wm. Palleday had made a lasting job of that bureau.

Another piece to play an important part in the room was a tall, japanned and ormolued grandfather clock, which only just cleared the ceiling. A lacquered golden cockerel was on its door, and a circular glass-covered hole showing the pendulum as it swung. This clock kept time to a second, and was wound up each Saturday night by Mrs. Corbyn. I found and bought it at an inn, together with a pair of Kneller period portraits in oval frames and some embroidered silks of girls holding birdcages, when I went to Woolpit Fair in Suffolk. I sold the portraits and silks for double the amount paid for the lot, getting the tall clock for nothing. I can see the innkeeper now with his old sisters.

He was known as "the Boy Alfred", and was too given to drinking.

A glass-fronted bookcase and bureau, yet another clock, and some chairs, bought from a shop in Lavenham when on a visit to the famous horse-fair. There were candlesticks, knife-boxes and oddments which I used to buy from old Ted Ellis—a dealer's buyer who attended sales, and who had a curiosity shop at the bottom of Grapes Hill in Norwich. He was a curiosity himself.

Ellis bought stuff for the Boswells. Many an evening developed into a carousal in the back room of the shop as he pulled out dusty bottles from parcels of old port bought at some country-house sale. And when the fire died low, someone broke up a crippled chair to make a blaze, while Ellis told tales of the days when he helped with the elephants in Sanger's Circus and of sales of furniture and pictures and knock-outs, until past midnight. Once, in extravagant mood, I went as far as buying a pair of Sheffield-plated candelabra from him, which finally gave a tone to my parlour.

I still possess those early belongings, and if I give them more space here than they deserve it is because, as first purchases, each gave me a new thrill when it arrived, and led me to alter the arrangement of the room. The rarest pieces—if I bought any now—could never give the same satisfaction or pride as when I stood back by the fireplace—treading on poor Friday—to take a look at the whole after some fresh addition. Mrs. Corbyn took great interest in the placing of the pieces and polished them, too. God bless her memory.

That room saw punch parties. The eighteenth-century recipe for this punch came from the landlord, father of the sisters at the Swan—a pint of rum, a pint of brandy, a pint of sherry. Lots of loaf-sugar, each lump being rubbed on the outside of a lemon until well saturated. (Note the delicate aroma of this process.) Two or more lemons—according to taste—to be cut in half and squeezed over the sugar in the bowl. A handful of cloves simmering gently on the stove, while the rum, brandy and sherry altogether are warming there, too, in a saucepan. Then a pint or more—according to taste—of boiling water is poured over the sugar in the bowl, the clove-water being added as well (here again, note the aroma). After stirring with the ladle, pour the warm spirits on and stir again. Then what a glorious, scented, steaming bowl of nectar for artists or anyone to sip! Its very smell alone made us merry and bright, starting away with "Landlord, fill the flowing bowl". This recipe has been tried

out in St. John's Wood, Chelsea, Cornwall, Paris—in Scotland, home of whisky, even—and never known to fail in making a night.

What hunting noises followed if horsemen made the party! What talking of hard riding! What tales of six-mile, ten-mile hunts on bold horses which could gallop and stay! One glass is enough now—1944—no more. One glass indeed! The war has sent up the prices of these once-cheap ingredients to fabulous sums, and lemons have passed out of sight and mind. Anyhow, punch made to recipe, quieted down even with more boiling water, has an intangible, delicate, insinuating flavour that defies description. It not only makes you smile, it awakens the fancy and dispels the gloom. Would our brain-cells have been better in the long run without those doses? The answer at once is: I can smell its spicy, odorous steam yet, see its pale amber colour in the clinking glasses—and could go through “Locksley Hall”, which I learned at sixteen. But of course the further question arises: without that recipe might I not have been able to go through the whole of Tennyson?

## VILLAGE MODELS

**R**AW sienna, French blue, cadmium yellow, vermillion, yellow ochre—those are the ingredients to write about, rather than rum, brandy and sherry, not forgetting the flake white.

What a day this is for the studio! A howling tempest of wind and driving rain has raged incessantly for three days and nights. The magnificent fuchsia in full bloom and yellow dahlias outside the window are tossed and torn in the wild blasts of Exmoor. Shocks of sodden oats are braving the storm on sodden fields. Yet here am I trying to paint in words in a summer-house, instead of painting in a studio. Will these recollections ever interest a soul or be an example, good or bad, to youthful artists? But I don't feel like painting, and so, for a few hours, let me use memory in another way—expressing myself in a different medium before the tablets of memory fade. My intention when beginning these recollections was to forestall anyone who might tell strange things about me when I am departed. Here is a story told to my wife a short time ago.

During the early months of my Presidency I was giving a private dinner in the beautiful Assembly Room. There was a fine show of the Academy's silver on the table: silver candlesticks, silver dessert-plates, salt-cellars, sugar sifters, a silver ship and every kind of lovely thing that was made in silver in the days of the Georges. My wife called at six o'clock with bunches of tulips to give the table colour, and, full of curiosity to see the Academy's display of silver, had gone up to the room where the caterer's butler was putting finishing touches to the table. Not knowing who my wife was, he told her that he had known Sir Alfred many years—the President was what he called "a goer". He also told her how, long ago, at a Royal Academy Club dinner, he was handing a dish of mutton cutlets to the man on Sir Alfred's right, and Sir Alfred, who was expressing himself about something or other, gave a flourish with his arm, and upset the chops over the table. The gentleman being served at the time had, like the rest, gone home very late, and the next morning his wife found a mutton chop in the pocket of his dinner-jacket!

But to my story. "Quick, thy tablets memory." The setting

and mixing of colours on a palette is more serious than mixing brandy, rum and sherry; but, without a pause, may become wearisome. The thought of a palette brings back days when I was for ever changing my size and style of palettes. In the Mendham studio, with the teasels in the jar on the table, the discarded palettes were hung on the walls until they took up room needed for paintings. Oblong ones were changed for oval, smaller for larger. Nobody could paint unless they used a large one, thought I. I tried a huge curved affair weighted with lead on the corner. Finally I came back to where I had started, using the sort that fitted my box. Often the studio, with smells of paint and turps, became impossible, and I was driven to work outdoors, with "the sky above my head and the grass beneath my feet".

This morning I awoke thinking of a big lad, Walter Butcher, sitting for me on a black pony with halters slung round its neck, as I had seen at horse fairs. I was putting him into a large water-colour—"An East Anglian Horse Fair"—from which I painted a vast canvas. The water-colour was hung in the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, and afterwards sold for twenty-five pounds to the owner of the pleasure wherry *Triumph*, on which we sailed the Norfolk Broads. This seemed an enormous sum for a water-colour, and when I happened to pay a visit to my old friends in the lithographic artists' room in Norwich, and was asked how I was getting on, I boasted of this sale; to which one replied: "Well, by Jove, that's all right! It takes only four of them to make a hundred quid!" This staggered us all.

My thoughts about the lad Walter Butcher, on the black pony with the halters slung round its neck, remind me that I used many models in those years; and that a pen picture of villagers who used to sit would not be out of place at this stage of my story.

Artists in the country have drawn their models from the young, aged or loafing fraternity not engaged in regular work. It was the same with me. A parcel of boys was always about the yards at home, and one of these—Willy Saxby, son of our groom—was my first model, and stood for me fishing by the mill-pool when I was but a few years his senior.

I made use of the others, too. One liked standing, another didn't. There was Teddy Holmes, a swarthy boy with a good colour, and well-fed; Jimmy Betts, with a pale, round face, sad blue eyes, and running nose, who looked as though he needed nourishment; and Freddy Pivott, a bright lad, with patched trousers, much too big for him. These were sons of carters work-

ing on the place. I recall, as I write, a forgotten work—my first attempt at a large canvas—sold to Mr. Page, head of Page Bros., for £5. It was done in my summer holiday from Norwich. The scene: two farm-boys and horses at a gate, with the buildings and yard of Walsham Hall in the background. The first boy, Freddy Pivott, sitting on a bay horse, holding a white one, came well. He was wearing a very wide old sun-hat, like a panama—I loved painting a face in shadow. All one long afternoon I worked painting the other boy, Saxby, undoing the gate. The picture was looking well. I was sure of a prize at the School of Art. When I showed it to one of the farm-hands, and then to other people, one and all said that the boy, supposed to be undoing the gate, looked as though he was doing something against the post. It was a blow!—a difficult passage to correct.

A bigger boy—Fred Baldry—used to fish from the boat, and liked being painted.

One wet day, old Bob Baldry, his father—a whitened, dusty mill-hand—sat mending sacks with Ephraim Butcher near a window in the mill. I saw them, and soon was back there with my water-colours, painting them as they bent over the dusty sacks, doing an indoor job on a wet day.

All artists can look back on the working of a particular picture which had given them extra pleasure. This was one of mine. Old Ephraim Butcher—fat, short, bearded and sorrowful, pig-feeder and pig-killer, for ever carrying two pails of pig-food on a yoke over his bowed shoulders, needed persuasion before agreeing to pose just anywhere at any time. He breathed heavily; and no wonder—he was the sole adviser to my father in all pig matters, and sang bass in the church choir. When a new High Church parson came and put the choir into purple cassocks and white surplices, everybody went to church; and as the processional hymn sounded up the nave, all eyes in the congregation were fixed on Butcher, round as a barrel, serious and heavy, bringing up the rear, making deep bass rumblings which meant nothing, for he could neither read nor write.

Then there was Dan Betts, one of our carters, who wore small silver earrings, and shaved off his moustache for me to put him in a picture, and became so transfigured that his wife and children didn't know him. A kind man and father. I used the family. Tilly, his little daughter, stands peeling an orange, with Jimmy, who is eating one, in a picture I called "A Gala Day", which now hangs in the Art Gallery in Preston.

Pod Aldous and Ned Aldous, types bred in every village since the Stone Age, and another of the same cut—Porky Emmerson—

were always ready, if about, to do anything in the standing or sitting line for a pint, or, better still, a quart. Pod Aldous was swarthy and secretive-looking, with beady, glowering black eyes, always on the move, and while those eyes turned to left or right, his head never budged between hunched-up shoulders—hunched because of his hands being always in trouser pockets, worn in front. He shaved his upper lip and chin, and grew short black whiskers all round his yellow face. A black clay pipe was always in his mouth and an old black bowler right down over the back of his head. He affected a higgler's style of dress—black, faded and soiled.

His brother Ned was heavier, looser, less cunning and without Pod's shifty eye, but of the same kidney, stealthy, sly, both of them closed up like oysters. I believe their line in life was what is known as higgling—fowl-dealing. Porky Emmerson was a mystery, who came and went and did harvests and helped to kill and dress pigs—hence his name.

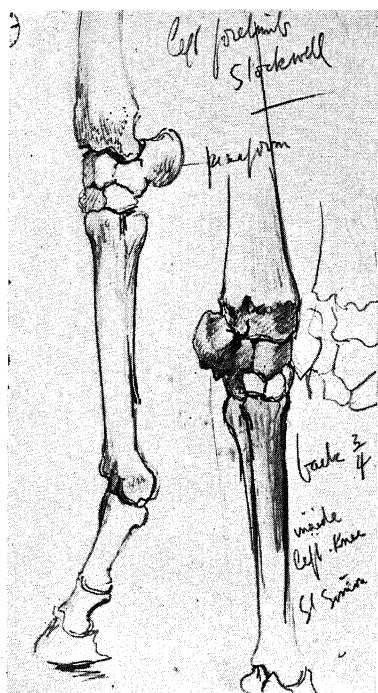
But the real professional at pig-killing was old Sam Rayner, who lived somewhere outside the village. In spite of all his engagements and journeys, I seized on him once or twice. He had a frizzy white beard and a bright eye with an optimistic stare, and carried not only his large basket but gossip as well from place to place, walking fast, with a stick, and his pipe in mouth, covering many miles in a day.

Then there was Richmer Emmerson of the Glebe, who wore his old black soft felt hat with brim looped up like Dick Turpin's. Harry Seaman, who later looked after horses and ponies that I collected, was a decent fellow. He helped me a lot. And there was Hoppy Daniels, lame in a leg, who had the reddest face in Suffolk, and wore a big watch-chain when I put him into my "gala day" picture in his best hat and coat.

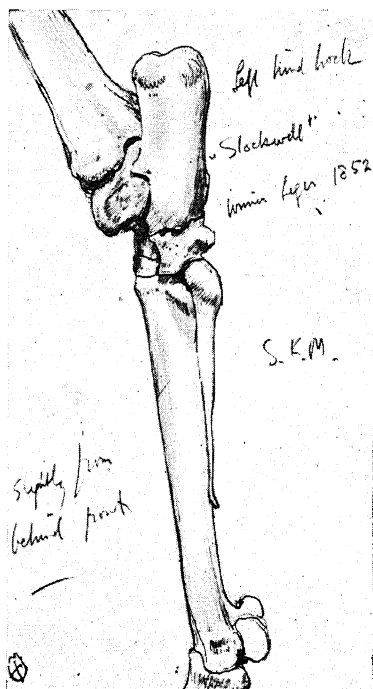
I must not forget Ephraim's daughter, Honor, for she stood for me on one occasion day after day through a heat wave, hay-making. When she felt rocky she sat in the shade of a tall, ancient nut-fence. One day I'll visit these places again. That nut-fence ran along the top of a small field belonging to a Mr. Cook, who had a grey mare I often painted. Ben Cook—that was his name.

Polly Scotchmer from the Red Lion was another model. She is on Hoppy's arm in the Preston picture. Then there were the three all-important, principal actors in the scene—the Grays, van-dwellers and travellers, who wintered in a meadow by the Red Lion, and disappeared each summer to Woolpit in Suffolk with their swinging-boats, coconuts and shooting-gallery, and

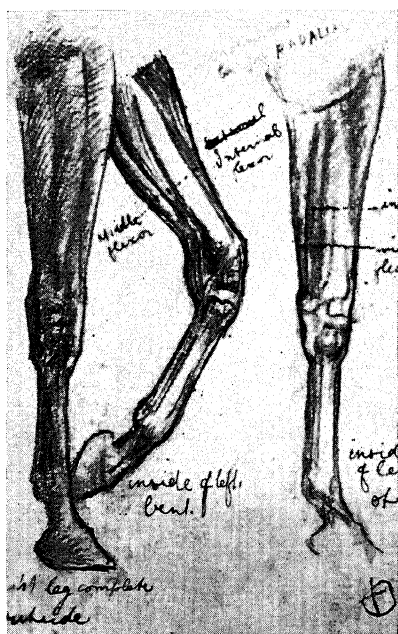




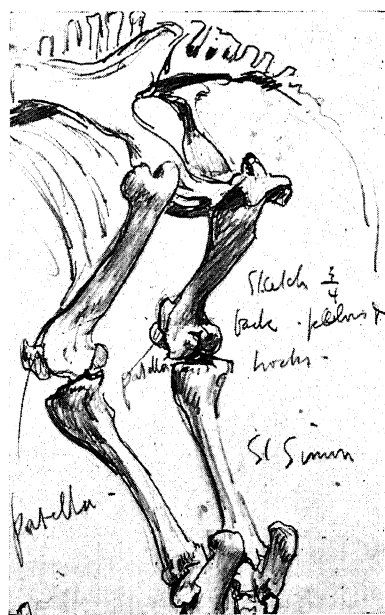
Left fore limb of Stockwell.



Left hind hock of Stockwell.



An anatomical page from early sketch-book.



Left knee of St. Simon.

Other drawings from skeletons in South Kensington Museum in a later sketch-book.



*Langham Mill Pool. "To use the word Arcadia here is not affectation." See page 120.*

used to come back later when I could afford to make it worth their while.

Old Gray—Nobby as he was called—was really a Suffolker, and Charlotte, a neat, strapping, tall figure of a woman, was a gypsy. Fred, known as “Young Fred”, was like his mother. The old man—Nobby—was a natty, wise-looking old bird. Bald-pated and clean-shaven, he was never without his clay pipe; and when reading the news or mending umbrellas he wore a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles which gave him the appearance of a crafty old lawyer. Charlotte’s black hair was parted and brushed flat back, and fastened in a little bun on the nape of her fat neck. She was a mighty woman, twice as heavy as the old man, brown as a berry, and stood with great arms folded across her bosom. When she ran on too much, old Gray would say in a scathing tone, “Be quiet, woman”—and she was. Fred was a good son, and worked at his coconuts while the mother shouted by the shooting-gallery and Gray attended the swings.

What a trio for an artist! And there they were for the asking. They loved posing, and still better they loved seeing a sovereign or a pint of beer. I dare not begin to think about what I should have done without the Grays—Nobby, Charlotte and Fred. Nobby was a philosopher. Life was full of interest for him, and he knew a lot about Suffolk—High Suffolk, as he called it. Walsham-le-Willows was his paradise. The flower show there was the best in the district.

## ANATOMY OF THE HORSE

IN between the spaces of life are a few landmarks which still show on the faint horizon of the past when one lies awake in the early hours, going far back in memory. These increase and surprise us as they arise and take shape.

Stubbs's *Anatomy of the Horse* makes a large landmark in my youthful days, with its copper-plate engravings, which at the time I was unable to appreciate to the full. Now, being older and knowing all there is to know of this great artist, through reading and looking at his work, I begin to realise what an indefatigable colossus Stubbs was. To study those plates—having read of how and why, after making his drawings, he also had to engrave them on copper himself because nobody else would do it—gives the serious artist food for much thought. Mr. Scott at the School of Art had told me, when talking of comparative and animal anatomy, that I should try to find a Stubbs's *Anatomy*; and one day I called in on Reuben Levine, who sold old silver and rare books, and he made a note of this, and advertised and got one—an original edition, in full size and good condition, for which I paid fifty shillings.

I had been drawing Rosa Bonheur's cast of the anatomical horse, and had studied other books. Then, with these plates, I began to understand the shape and make of the horse, and while I was full of enthusiasm and acquiring fresh knowledge came another event, all to the good. This was the gift to the Museum of the most perfectly set up skeletons of a man and horse, which were given by an old vet who was retiring from practice.

The man, whose bones had been so well preserved, had been a murderer, and was hanged at the castle. He must have been a tall fellow. The teeth were white, not one was missing. The skeletons had been standing for forty years in an old stable loft in the premises of Mr. Morniment, the veterinary—a gruesome sight to encounter in the shadows or with the white light of the moon streaming through the skylight. I had often seen them there, and stood conjecturing on Nature's extravagant wonders.

I knew this group so well that when expounding to some ignoramus of the horse-world on the comparison of the horse's anatomy to our own, I always carried the impression of it in my

mind, as I still do to-day. The horse's hocks were the man's ankles, each with six bones; its knees were our own wrists; the horse walked on its fingers and toes; the stifle-joint was the human knee, and all the rest. Some listener might have been impressed, but few of them listened or cared, and my words fell on stony ground. For all that, I am sure that comparative anatomy can help both the artist and the horse-master.

Another chance of seeing sights of blood came my way. The cavalry regiments which were quartered in Norwich kept a pack of hounds which hunted the carted deer, and their kennels were near the barracks on Mousehold Heath. I was introduced, through a woman who painted horses, to a Captain Marriott, the veterinary officer of a dragoon regiment then in the city, and he arranged for me to see a dead horse skinned at the kennels on a certain afternoon. I shall never like seeing the skin taken off an animal. Seeing it as a student, my wonderment should have overcome my horror. It failed then, as it does now.

Not long ago I was painting at the Pytchley kennels. As I sat at work, with a boy holding a hound on a leash, I could hear a faint rattle coming from a shed adjoining the slaughter-house at the top of the meadow, caused by rats feeding in the mountainous piles of bones stored there. Then I saw, coming through a gate, a groom riding one horse and leading another, both good-looking horses. Being too engrossed with my study of hounds, I took no notice of this entry. A few minutes later there came the report of a gun.

"That's done for him," said the boy holding the hound.

The groom appeared again on his horse, without its lately led stable-companion, and went through the gate as he had come. Out of curiosity, I walked up to the slaughter-house, and found that the kennel-man had already begun to flay the horse, a large thoroughbred chestnut that had belonged to Mr. George Drummond. At the sight of that flayed head and eye I fled, and got to work again.

Belonging to such a man, this horse would have been a good performer, and he looked the sort as I saw him led across to be destroyed; and here he was, in a great pool of blood which was draining away, his glossy skin being torn from him, soon to feed the hounds he had followed from many a cover. Such is life.

Those studies-in-the-making were for a picture of Barker, the Pytchley huntsman. Captain Macdonald Buchanan then was Master, and the picture was for him. Some years before that I had painted Freeman on a black horse called Pilot for Mr. Ronald Tree, Master at that time.

When I find the energy to turn over the heaps of old sketch- and note-books which have accumulated during my life, I realise that I did a lot of work; and as I find earlier, soiled, old books I come upon drawings of that Norwich skeleton, of its parts, either from one side or the other: drawings from Stubbs; from the Rosa Bonheur horse; and in much later ones, very carefully done, fore and hind parts from the skeletons of St. Simon and Stockwell in South Kensington Museum. I was doing this with fresh interest not long before the war, and now as I write, with the war still on, I wonder where such historic treasures of the equine world are housed. Where is the skeleton of Eclipse which belongs to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons? No doubt it is in a safe place. Think of that famous horse's skeleton, once covered and articulated with tendon, muscle and nerve, all under the rich, dark-chestnut coat, groomed and polished day after day throughout his short span. These used to be my thoughts as I looked at the structure standing in its glass case. Yes; indeed those bones had travelled about the country in the 1760's, all once part of a live and famous steed as we see him portrayed in the picture by Stubbs, with Wildman, his owner, and his two sons, in blue coats, cocked hats, white stockings and buckled shoes. That skull had once contained the brain and racing instincts of Eclipse! His eye had moved in and looked out from the dark socket. His lips had covered and been drawn over those teeth, had played with the bit and sneered when smelling something queer, and had played afterwards with many a mare at stud! And what crowds were once attracted by the horse! what betting! what noise of coarse shouting!—and now, here were his white bones in a glass case!

I wanted more paper. I keep reams of it in an old Jacobean oak chest next the fireplace behind me. Before I can open the lid of the chest I have to remove what stands on it. An old copper urn, a large oriental bowl full of rose-leaves, and a white, horse's skull. This skull has stood there for years. Friends say, "How hideous!" I explain to them the beauty of it, although there is a ghostliness about the dark, hollow eye-sockets, the teeth. Being in too much haste to write, the skull is still in the grandfather chair near the chest, where I should have replaced it after closing the lid.

There it sits, showing the frontal bones, the subtle modelling of the bridge of the nose, the dark cavities where the eyes once shone, and lower, where the bony formation ends, and where the velvety expanding surfaces above the nostrils used to quiver. The bone of the lower jaw and its rows of grinders meets the top row, and in the lamplight the whole skull seems alive.

It came from the Pytchley kennels—the skull of a thoroughbred. What a train of imaginary thought is already laid! What a story could be woven about that skull, which seems so alert and listening! And yet a lifeless object to examine, with a magic grain in the bone more delicate than the grain in precious wood. Ivory traceries and shapes. A miracle of creation—of God; a mere trifle in a world of mysteries, of millions upon millions of God's masterpieces.

I lift it from the chair and place it again on the lid of the old oak chest. The grain of the wood is God's design, the grain of the bone is God's design. I know less than nothing. As I placed it, looking down on the perfect symmetry of the forehead, the curve, occipital bones, I was astounded.

What are mere paintings—politics—anything? Nature is lasting—supreme.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### WITH MY FATHER IN STOKE-BY-NAYLAND DISTRICT

**T**HIS is the 21st June, 1948. We are back again in Castle House, Dedham, our country home. It was taken by the Army in 1940. Getting back into a house that has been so occupied turns a man grey. A legion of troubles has come and gone. Presidential duties and painting are mere pastimes compared with blocked drains, concreted lawns, concreted shower-baths, Nissen huts, cooking-huts, no shelves left.

But let me forget these nightmare drolleries—trifles. Instead, let me recall how in the end it was a blessing for my last remaining horses, which were sent to our Exmoor home, where it was possible to get good food for them.

I have tried to do too many things at once. As we all well know, you can do only one thing at a time. How true is that old song of George Grossmith's:

You can only wear one tie,  
Have one eyeglass in your eye,  
One coffin when you die,  
Don't you know!

At last it is possible to think, to be in a mood to pick up the threads of what I was trying to write about three years ago—the distant past. Try as I may, my present surroundings distract my thoughts. This large dining-room, used only for parties and uproars, as Surtees called them, even the Sheraton table I write at, bring other happenings between me and the more distant ones I am seeking. I remember how, when staying at Windsor painting the Ascot procession, I took a bottle of vintage port along from my hotel to a shop where two young men sold antiques, and this table was one of my purchases. I think of it with all its leaves in, surrounded by jolly faces on New Year's Eves.

Now it is no longer the table that diverts my thoughts. It is the chorus of birds outside in the garden. Loud, clear notes of blackbirds and thrushes dominate all the songs of other birds, until, during a pause, I hear yet more distinctly the never-ceasing song of the chiff-chaff. He never stops from morning to night. When in the central hall, I can hear him through rooms, walls



and doors. This little singer is so insistent that when all other sounds cease for awhile, he still carries on, never showing himself. The moment I arrive by car or from the station I hear him. I come into the hall to deal with a pile of letters and papers, and I hear him. I go upstairs to my room for something or to change, and still I hear his song plainly among the rustle of leaves or the clamour of blackbirds mobbing a cat or an owl. There's the cooing of wild doves, the chatter of sparrows, the cheep of fly-catchers, the dirge of green linnets and quaint sounds from families of tits; yet the chiff-chaff goes on. Alas! I am told it is because he has lost his mate and is calling for another.

But away with the songs of birds and things around me. At last, concentrating yet again on those days of yore, I am able to recall a nineteenth-century journey with my father when we visited his old country on the Essex and Suffolk borders, and stayed a night here at Dedham village, a very long time ago. It seems fitting that I should take up my recollections at this point, for when we made that journey I little dreamed that I should ever be living at Dedham in this house, an older man than my father was at the time we stayed at the Sun Hotel.

It may have been in 1898 or 1899. But no matter when, it was ages ago that I persuaded my father to take a week with me in this, his old country. He was born at Little Horkesley Hall, an old farmhouse near the church. Later his father took a large farm at Stoke-by-Nayland. It is called Scotland Place Farm. Passing it only recently on my return ride from Suffolk, my memory served me well. While my gluttonous steed pulled at the overgrown rank cocksfoot grasses, I sat and thought of that distant day when my father and I stepped down from the tall dogcart which we hired at the hotel—more than forty years ago.

On this spot, looking at Scotland Place, my father told me how, as a small boy, he was being chased by his father, and to escape a thrashing, he had fled to the great wash-house, which he showed me, and had hidden under the skirts of old Betty, who was at the wash-tub; and again, how he and a farm-boy had pushed the donkey into the stream that runs by the house and through the meadows.

After finding the graves of the Munnings family in the churchyard, we went to see the tall, handsome, Tudor almshouses behind the church. On the steps of one there was an old country man—a picture. We spoke to him, and he took us in to see his wife, and we found that he was once the very lad who, with Master John—as he called my father—had pushed the donkey in the stream.

But to our journey. We had arranged for a dogcart to meet us at Manningtree station and take us to Dedham, making our first stop on the way at Flatford Mill. We found it beautiful, unspoilt, as in the days of Constable. The mill was working—no curiosity for sightseers then. There were the locks, the barges, the tow-path and horses. No bottles or food-papers littered the meadows. No sound of car or char-a-banc. Only the sound of the mill, ducks on the stream and the breeze in the trees.

I remember we sent on the dogcart with our baggage, and walked to Dedham along the tow-path, meeting a horse towing a barge. Again at Dedham little could have altered since Constable painted there. At an ancient house in the mill lane—the house with the seven gables, as I now call it—my father met old Mr. Ebenezer Clover, who owned the mills then; and what a reunion it was!

After spending the night at the Sun Hotel we drove to Langham Mills, meeting another friend of yore, old Mr. Boreham. Passing a load of hay on a mill cart, my father recognised a rosy-faced old man seated on the top.

“Are you Mr. Boreham?”

“I am. And who may you be?”

“Why, John bor!” he cried when he knew. He slipped off the load of hay into the lane and took my father’s hand. “To think it is over forty years since we used to meet at Colchester and Sudbury!”

Langham Mill stood in the middle of the valley, away from any village. A long lane led down to it from the Boxted road and another from the Stoke-by-Nayland road. To use the word *Arcadia* here is not affectation. No other word could describe Langham Mill, its lock, bridge, mill-pool, floodgates and trees. No miller’s daughter out of a Tennyson poem ever dwelt in such a spot as this.

It is thirty years since I came to live here. From 1919 to 1935 I used to paint there, bathe there, row there in a boat, walk there, ride there. To know it was three miles away gave me a distinct happiness. No pen could describe what has happened to that *Arcadia*. The London and South Essex Water Board bought the place soon after old Boreham died. A vast, concrete, Egyptian-looking temple of a pumping-station stands where the mill once stood. On still summer nights the sound of it pumping millions of gallons from the river to London can be heard miles away. Great built-up reservoirs stretch to more pumping-stations, and rows of badly-designed houses with a concrete roadway. Nothing worse could happen to a pleasant valley. A river that was

once always full, bearing barges on its bosom to Sudbury, is often now a ditch. But with mills disappearing, such rivers gradually lose their trim domestic beauty. Constable's age has gone, ours is here. How little I thought then of that beautiful river landscape, seeing it in 1898, taking it all as a matter of course. Never did I dream the locks would go, the river shrink, the pollard willows, once so trim, be left to overgrow themselves so that no stem could carry the great tops. One by one they split and fall, are hurled to the ground in gales, or lie rotting by the stream as the years speed on. Since the high level of the river is maintained between Dedham and its last new lock at Flatford for urban multitudes who come to it, eat teas by it, boat on it and use it for their increasing millions in taps, baths, lavatories and factories, what is left of the humble stream, no longer turning all its mills, should be kept scenic.

CHAPTER XXIV  
MY FIRST HORSE

SINCE horses have been with me in dreams and when awake, let me tell of a nightmarish experience that momentarily shook my existence and humbled my pride at the age of twenty-two.

A determination one day to possess a horse of my own—in spite of inward prophetic apprehensions saying “no”—urged me to bring this about. Were I walking or cycling, or riding somebody else’s horse, and met this person or that on the road, I hoped one day I should look on them from the back of a beautiful grey horse of my own. What triumph if it were old Miss That or Mrs. So-and-so in brougham or victoria, being driven by a liveried coachman! Now and then I even met and passed a carriage and pair from a hall in a park, and imagined myself from the back of my own lovely grey, complacently looking down on them, and they wondering who this young man might be.

I was still living in the house of my parents, because I have never forgotten the bedroom and bed where those dreams of that horse were dreamt. Saying nothing of my ambitious designs, I at last saw a sale of hunters at Ipswich advertised in the *East Anglian*, the earliest newspaper I can remember. My father, whose stable I intended using, cared little whether I bought a horse or not. Like many parents, he had learned to give way to selfish sons.

On the day of the sale, in breeches and leggings, I entrained for Ipswich. I got a catalogue and hung about for the “lot” I hoped to buy—one of three from a Mr. Long who lived near Saxmundham, sold as “a good hunter, eight years old”. A large, fine-looking bay horse it was, with cock tail and his mane on, full sixteen hands. Affecting nonchalance, I had the horse trotted out. As the other horses went up and were sold, at what I then thought were good prices—such as thirty and forty guineas to fifty or sixty pounds—I waited impatiently for this beautiful bay. His turn came, and the bidding reached twenty-five pounds. Should I bid or should I not—and return home ignominiously, without a horse and glory? Suddenly I awoke and threw all the future to the winds, and was bidding twenty-eight guineas of my small, hard-won account at Barclay’s Bank, Harleston,

where Mr. Stebbings, who sang "True, true till death", stood behind the counter, wearing his gold eyeglasses. Good Lord! what would he say?

But, in spite of fright and fears, I went on bidding, and got the horse for thirty-six guineas. Paralysed, I tried to give my name to the auctioneer, and finally went round behind and gave it. I took out the cheque-book (the second or third in my life) and paid. Then, as I went down to the boxes and gave instructions about putting the horse on the train, a tall, smiling swell of forty-five or thereabouts came up to me.

"It's you who bought the horse?"

"Yes," said I, utterly ignorant of what classified a horse as "a good hunter".

"Now," said he, "when he comes to a turn he may want to dispute the way with you. He doesn't mean anything; just give him a good dig in the ribs with your heels and he'll go on."

I smiled a superior smile with dread in my heart. Here was a beginning!

A telegram was sent to meet the train at Harleston with a saddle and bridle in the cart. I travelled on the train. I believe my brother met me, and soon the horse was out, to the surprise and admiration of the porters and lookers-on. Then we saddled him and, getting on top of his sixteen hands, I rode from the station and through the town in pride and vain exultation. A more thrilling ride I never had known than this on my first horse. His name was Topthorne—and I was the victim.

Arriving home, in the stable yard, Saxby, the groom, stood all eyes and ears.

"Well, bless me! What on earth possessed you to buy a great 'oss like that? What you want is a nice little sort about fifteen hands at the most."

He was a saddened and disheartened man, all because I wanted to look down on people in broughams and victorias.

The next day the family turned out to see the horse do a gallop round the North meadow. It ended in dishonour and defeat. After nearly getting into a cesspool from the cattle-sheds and doing everything a nappy horse does when he knows he has a fool on his back, I at last got him to a ford across the river leading to vast plains of grassland. My father, who had been telling me that the horse would kill me, followed with a long whip. In the middle of the ford the horse acted his part to perfection. How I kept on him or got him to the other side I shall never know.

What a ride I had after that! The third time round this great field (it seemed enormous then—about twenty acres or so) the horse

said "No", and his tactics were those which nappy horses have employed ever since they were ridden. No wonder he had been passed on—and what a curse to pass on to me, of all folk!

The best part of my savings stood there in the box, Saxby, gloomy and downcast, staring at him with me, my father assuring me that he would kill me. What a horse and what a back and loins! But his eye had beaten me. I knew nothing of "scrumpy" eyes then. I continued to ride while Saxby cut down the corn. Being a miller's son, there was all the bran I needed. The horse had days, and as I got used to him and learned to know him, he gave less trouble, until one day he refused to pass a donkey and cart, walked through a low fence into the vicarage garden, trod all over the vicar's asparagus beds, and reared and turned and played hell in the strawberries.

I stuck to my purchase long enough to enjoy one great triumph. On a certain day I was to call for my dear doctor friend, George Candler, at his house in Harleston. He was a real hunting doctor, and rode a large old thoroughbred called Rocket, bought at Tattersalls. Candler and his partner Robinson gloried in a day with the Dunston or Lord Stradbroke's harriers. The doctor was to take me with him to Sydney Carmen of Pulham Hall. Carmen was a clean-shaven, rosy-looking, horsey, hunting bachelor farmer. There, with a large black-bearded and famous farmer, named Joe Dimmock, of Shotford Hall, we were to have a school over Pulham Hall farm.

Arriving in front of the surgery with its polished brass plate, and peering in at the windows of the doctor's house, I spied Candler's face. Down the steps he came, looking green with envy.

"My word," said he, "what a horse! He's worth sixty guineas, Alfred!"—anything from fifteen to twenty-five being the doctor's figure!

There I sat watching the reflection of myself in the Georgian drawing-room window. Already I had seen ourselves in every shop window, and wished the horse were as good as he looked; for he satisfied my vain ambitions so far as appearances went.

We were soon at Pulham, where the other two horsey men wondered how I could ever have possessed such a horse or indulged in such extravagance. However, they saw daylight both between the horse and myself (and in my deal also) when he refused the first ditch and fence and gave a magnificent and healthy display on his bran-feeding. This was my fault, though, being no horseman. The climax came, for after nearly fulfilling my father's prophecy that he would kill me, Tophthorne rose to the occasion. After all sorts of trapeze contortions, I got him over

this place, and that with the others calling out to me to "lay back", until we came to a large hurdled sheepfold. Soon all the other three were put to shame. Not one of their steeds would have it. They rode, kicked and jammed away to no good. Then they said, "You see if you can give us a lead", and in blissful ignorance, streaming with sweat, I trotted up to the hurdles. My sinner leaped over them with ease, went on and leaped out over the other side, and there I sat triumphant.

"He's a good horse," they all said, for nothing would get their own over.

This short-lived comfort gave place to agony of mind, and nightmares happened in succession as I awoke, in a cold sweat, gasping and calling "Whoa". The horse had his days. He made anything he met an excuse to tyrannise over his abject rider.

The end came thus. There were sales of horses at Grimwade's of Colchester, and I entered the horse in one of these. On the journey he cut his legs and got down in the box, and was sold at the sale for fifteen guineas.

How lightheartedly I came home, and how my stomach turned at the thought of that horse, and how deeply I hated him, I cannot express in words. I regained my peace of soul, and resigned my foolhardiness for a more humble and temperate way of life.

It was some time before I again thought of having a horse to ride. I was content to exist on youth, spirits and health, whilst Saxby and my father had the satisfaction of knowing I was not killed. My desperation and despair gave way to exultant freedom. A horse was a nuisance. Give me a walk with Friday, hunting the hedgerows. No more horses!

Some purchaser bought a sound animal for a small sum. Work being the only cure for such a sort, I had imposed long distances on him, which had no effect whatever either on his limbs or constitution. His only unsoundness was in his head.

In the days of my vanity I had wished to be seen on the back of a fine horse. So often were he and I at variance that my first act, after being floored, was to look round to make sure no living soul had seen me!

When writing of my first horse this morning, imagination carried me away. So vividly was I living in the past, that when I mounted one of my friendly steeds for an afternoon ride, I thought that I was again on the back of that revolutionary monster of forty odd years ago. Not until I rode out of the stable yard was I able to cast off the nightmare. A lively imagination let loose becomes a curse!

## CHAPTER XXV

### BEN COOK'S GREY MARE AND BROADWOOD PIANO

A SPELL of painting followed this draught of idle misery. At the time I was beginning to employ an old son of the soil; and we formed a friendship which lasted until he died.

His name was Norman. He was a grandfather many times over. Dan Betts, of whom I have written in my list of early models, was his son-in-law. Betts's children are in the Whitsuntide picture, and grandfather Norman is there, in a white hat with a blue linen coat and white apron. His all-round grey whiskers are worn in this picture. He was over eighty,—active and strong, hale and hearty:—a nature's gentleman, a swell of the soil. Indeed, one of "the rude forefathers of the hamlet", if ever there was one. He had a fine countryman's face, a good nose, and a well-shaped mouth. His top lip and chin were clean shaven, in the fashion of Mr. Watchhorn—Sir Harry Scattercash's huntsman in *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*. He often wore one of those hundred-year-old smocks seen in Leech's drawings, and either a corduroy-and-drabbet sleeve waistcoat, or a truly cut countryman's jacket of earlier days. A coloured handkerchief, bird's eye, was worn round his neck. His cord trousers were tied below the knee, and sometimes he wore a closish-fitting pair of horseman's breeches and box leggings.

I resume the habit of closing my eyes—the only way to get back into my other life—and I see a three-cornered garden between the curving road and the blacksmith's garden. I see carrots, I see a row of peas and a figure quietly busy there. No better sight in the world—an old countryman, full of wisdom and knowledge of the soil, at work in a vegetable garden, with a background of gooseberry and currant bushes.

"Hi, Norman! are you busy?"

"Well, not if you want me, Master Alfred."

"It's our day to-day, Norman; glass going up. Let's be off to Ben Cook's after that mare and foal."

Drawing the back of his strong old hand across the end of his nose, he left the peas, and soon, with my things, we were making



for Mr. Cook's, ten minutes away up the hill leading to Withersdale. The house, with its steeply-pitched roof, stood near the road, grown into its set of small buildings, and surrounded by a garden with apple-trees. Pigs were about, and numerous Black Minorca hens—attended by a cockerel. The cockerel had a large handsome comb. I see the cock now as plain as a pikestaff. Black Minorca and cuckoo-coloured fowls were everywhere then. Ben Cook's were a lovely, glossy lot, and I see their white earlobes and large red combs. I see also, in a mud hole, a huge sow with lop ears. Bullace-trees; a straw-covered cartshed . . . through the gate a blaze of buttercups and daisies that dazzle the sight, and there, peacefully grazing and swishing her long tail, is a grey mare, with a foal at her side.

Mr. Cook is hoeing on his top field, and sees us. Norman puts a halter on the mare while I get ready for the thousandth time. Bees fly back and forth to the hives in the garden. Mrs. Cook moves about by the back door, and her husband goes on hoeing to the sound of sheep—sheep were on all farms then. I paint on until dinner-time—a little before one. The picture is left in a shed with the box and easel, and work is resumed again after two.

Norman was not always holding horses or being painted, or gardening. He took part in other scenes—bacchanalian scenes at night in the studio.

Where did I buy that old Broadwood grand piano, with its pale-coloured inlaid case and mellow tone? At one of those little wine-parties with the Boswells in "Ellis's" at the bottom of Grapes Hill, Norwich. It was sent to Harleston station, and Fred Gray—Nobby's son—went to fetch it with one of his father's horses in the coconut trolley. The old horse pulled the trolley and its load through the gateway, right up to the large double doors of the studio. Here is the scene of its arrival.

The piano is so covered and bound up that Norman is entirely mystified when he, Nobby and Fred lift it from the trolley, and still more mystified when, all uncovered, it lies on the studio floor. Three large wrapped-up legs are unfolded, showing turnings and castors complete, and, to the astonishment of the old "rude forefather of the hamlet", each leg is screwed in place.

He is still at a loss until I draw up a chair, open the lid and begin to play one of my few waltzes, "Ehren on the Rhine". Then I sing the lines which the boys sang when I was very young:

Dear love, dear love, be true,  
 This heart is ever thine.  
 When the war is o'er, we'll part no more  
 At Ehren on the Rhine.

"Well," says Norman, "that dew wholley stam me!"

This old piano, with a soft, mellow tone—which no change of temperature ever affected, which stood all the misuses of punch and beer evenings—played its part in my life. It made those days and nights. I wrote songs and accompanied myself with certain vamps which I had learned from my mother, for she was a good pianist and accompanist. My mother's love of music may be better understood from the following extract from her diary:

"Dancing is the craze just now, and the Vicar is lending his drawing-room every Monday evening to the young folks to dance and I play for them, it is all a change and I love music.

"I went to the Norwich Festival in October, heard Mozart's 'Requiem' and Sullivan's 'Golden Legend'—I am able through the generosity of my sons to get a treat like this sometimes and what a difference it makes to my life. I would work a month to hear music like that, and what few chances I have had! But perhaps that is why, when I do get the chance, I enjoy it so much.

"Sunday evening, January 14th.—I am alone in the house with the dogs, enjoying the solitude at the piano—I went to church this afternoon, and could not help comparing the congregation with that of forty years ago. To-day, nearly all the front benches were empty, not a single farmer in the church—and the congregation mostly women—forty years ago the church was often full—Mr. Brereton was a good preacher, and the singing congregational and happy."

I find one more entry:

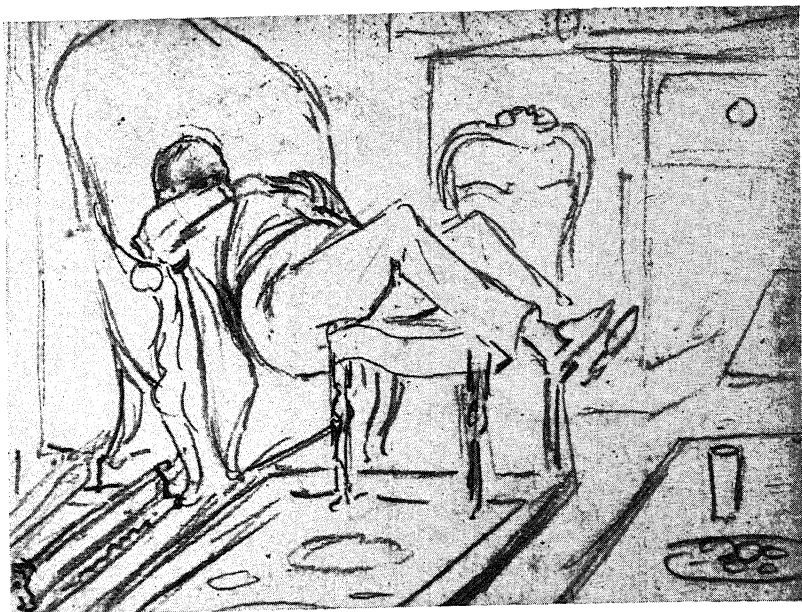
"Sunday, March 14th, 1909."—It seems that my mother only wrote in this diary on Sundays—a day in which she gave herself up to melancholy. I find I inherit this same trait. She says:

"The house is almost unbearably quiet this Sunday; not a soul to be heard or seen about. I have read Mr. Balfour's speech on Tariff Reform at the London Reform Club—written sundry letters, played Chopin Waltzes etc., still it is only 8.30 p.m. and the day seems interminable. It was too cold to go to church, one never knows if the stove is warming it. There seems to be a conspiracy on foot to make the stove go wrong and when a fire is most wanted, it won't burn, or it smokes, and the church is as cold as a barn.

"This is the All Saints Festival and I must close and go to the Communion Service. With his usual bad management the Vicar had not arranged for a fire in the church. Mr. Forster (the school-master who sang in the choir) was doing his utmost to be heard above everyone; his shouting was most irreverent and they drawled the beautiful Easter hymns so that I could not join in them."



50" X 30"  
*Detail of "Sunny June", picture in Norwich Art Gallery. One of my earliest outdoor paintings of any size.*



*Drawing of an uncle asleep on a Sunday afternoon.*



Left: Gray.



Right: Charcoal drawing of Norman in the studio, looking at the beginning of large picture of "The Vagabonds".

Often have I heard her playing for the Australian cousins, Ernest and Stanley Wilkinson, the latter, up from Cambridge, said to be the best tenor in the University, and Ernest, a baritone, who, as Ernest Melbo, sang on the concert stage. Stanley used to sing such songs as "The Bedouin's Love Song". A great turn in his repertoire was:

Ho! reach me the armour  
That hangs on the wall,  
And choose me the lance  
That is strongest of all.  
And bring me my warhorse—  
In mail let him be,  
For I yearn for the fight  
That is wronged upon me.

But the favourite was "Love's golden dream is o'er". Like the rest, it went to a waltz refrain. After leaving Cambridge the tenor-singing Stanley returned to Melbourne, where his father held the living of Queenscliffe. When it came to the question of this cousin being ordained he gave up the idea, because he could not believe in the things in which he was supposed to believe.



*A try-out in composition on a wet afternoon.*

CHAPTER XXVI

SONGS OF MY YOUTH

**B**UT to go back to the old amber-coloured piano with the makers' name, "John Broadwood & Sons", on the inside of that perfectly lifting lid. A composition that I first played on it, the mellow chords helping me to sing, ran like this:

I feel very lazy and loose,  
For pictures don't seem any use,  
But days that are sunny  
Are better than money,  
So working may go to the deuce.

I'd like a good spree and a revel,  
For I've got to a very low level;  
But I don't care a damn,  
I'll stop as I am,  
And the future may go to the devil.

This went to a kind of limerick tune. Another song was about being dead:

In the end, when I shall die,  
I shall see no summer sky;  
And sleeping I shall lie  
All the day.  
Then with angels I shall go  
To the skies so bluey blue,  
Where my troubles all will blow  
Right away.

I shall never feel the breeze  
Among the lovely trees,  
And the mould will make me sneeze,  
I'll be bound.  
For when I'm lying low,  
In my coffin, don't you know,  
The time will go so slow,  
Underground.

And the artists who survive,  
Are in this world alive,  
They'll have to work and strive  
For their pay.  
And at night they'll go to sleep  
And only rise to weep,  
Because alive they've got to keep  
Another day.

And so I'm not forgot,  
 When my bones begin to rot  
 A stone will mark the spot  
     Where I lie.  
 It will stick above the grass  
 So when the others pass  
 'Twill remind each silly ass  
     He's got to die.

These lines, as we sang them years ago, are written from memory. The Broadwood made our sausage evenings, which frequently happened on Saturdays through the winter. At the Red Lion a pig was killed every Friday by old Sam Rayner, and the best sausages in the world were made there. John Scotchmer, the landlord, was an honest soul, his wife the rosiest specimen of homeliness, and his old mother a wonder of almost ninety. She wore a pale-blue linen, hooded bonnet.

On a given Saturday, about 6.30, Gray had a good fire in the large tortoise-stove in the studio, and Fred, the son, brought the sausages in a basket covered with a white cloth. They chipped the potatoes and we drank beer, taking it out of the Broadwood. I can smell the frying sausages now, and hear them hiss as they are turned with a fork. As they were browning, sizzling and scenting the air with the best smell I know, we all started off with great fervour and gusto on a song specially composed for these nights. Here a grand fellow who could play sat down and did wonders on that piano, its rich tones resounding through the night in that spacious studio. The sausage song went to the tune of "Polly wolly doodle all the day", thus:

If pork is put through a sausage machine  
 We soon have a nice long string  
 Of sausages, fat and fresh and clean!  
     Of sausages now I'll sing.

We'll put them all in a frying-pan bright  
 And see them turning brown;  
 When the undersides are done just right  
     We'll turn them topsides down.

We hear them frizzle and we smell them smell,  
 We think of the feast to come;  
 The fire is hot and the coals burn well  
     And the —s will soon be done.

*Chorus.*

Oh, sausages, come; oh, sausages, come,  
 Oh, sausages come from pork.  
 We'll eat them all off a d—d hot plate  
     With the use of a knife and fork.

There were endless impromptu verses with strong words. All the time Gray was browning the sausages and chips over the large stove, red hot on the top, whilst Fred, the son, was shugging the first panful, now ready, over an oil-stove. Then Norman, pouring out more ale, would say, "Sirs, supper's ready", and soon we were at it. I shed tears of joy and regret at thoughts of those feasts.

When supper was cleared, we smoked and talked. Then we began, with method, to brew punch in a large blue-and-white bowl. There were the lemons, the loaf-sugar, the cloves. There stood the bottles—rum, brandy, sherry. On the stove the kettle singing, as only a kettle can sing. How pleasant to recall! The rubbing of the loaf-sugar on the lemons went on, whilst to the strains of the Broadwood we again started off, with increased fervour, a song of punch specially written for those evenings:

Have you felt the queer feeling,  
The feeling of love?  
Have you lost any money at races?  
Have you been such a fool  
As to look up above  
And imagine you've seen angel faces?

Have you tasted of punch?  
If not, try a glass.  
You'll see angel forms with the faces,  
You'll float in the sky  
With a beautiful lass  
Away in the heavenly spaces.

Oh, punch, it is good!  
It is brimming with joys,  
If you only lose count of your glasses;  
And the fellows who say,  
"No, thank you, my boys",  
Are nought but despicable asses.

Have you heard of the fellows  
Who're brewing the bowl—  
The bowl which is sending the steam up?  
They'll sing and they'll roll  
When they hear the bell toll,  
And wake all the people who dream up.

They'll live very long,  
They're jolly and strong—  
It's a job that keeps 'em a-going;  
For when they have done  
They have only begun  
To fill up the bowl which is flowing!



And here's to the fellows  
 Who drink the punch,  
 To those who never get bowled out;  
 May they pass the glass round  
 When they're under the ground  
 To keep the wet and the cold out.

So we'll join hands around,  
 May we ever be found  
 Sitting round the old bowl which is filling,  
 And may all our glasses  
 Be empty next round,  
 And to drink may we ever be willing.

This went with a good swing to a one-two-three sort of waltz refrain; but it was nothing compared with the only song of the kind ever written, "Landlord, fill the flowing bowl". A man could sing off the effects of the strongest bowl with the chorus of that rollicking song, which goes with plenty of verses.

Norman was butler, and waited on us, and, like the Grays, fed with us on these occasions. Afterwards he judiciously kept the glasses filled according to what he thought was the capacity of each guest.

The next song on the programme was a fizzer. We called it "John Brown". It went thus:

For the King shall take the Queen,  
 And the Queen shall take the Knave,  
 And as we're in good company  
 We'll drink another stave:  
 Here's to you, John Brown.

*Chorus.*

Here's to you with all my heart.  
 We'll have another glass or two  
 To-night before we part.  
 Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Queen shall take the Knave,  
 And the Knave shall take the Ten,  
 And as we're in good company  
 We'll keep it up like men;—  
 Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Knave shall take the Ten,  
 And the Ten shall take the Nine,  
 And as we're in good company  
 And you're all good friends of mine,  
 Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Ten shall take the Nine,  
And the Nine shall take the Eight,  
And as we're in good company  
We'll keep it up till late:  
Here's to you, John Brown!

For the Nine shall take the Eight,  
And the Eight shall take the Seven,  
And as we're in good company  
And it's only just eleven,\*  
Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Eight shall take the Seven,  
And the Seven shall take the Six,  
And as we're in good company  
We'll keep it up like bricks:  
Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Seven shall take the Six,  
And the Six shall take the Five,  
And as we're in good company  
We'll keep the game alive!  
Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Six shall take the Five,  
And the Five shall take the Four,  
And as we're in good company  
We'll drink a bottle more:  
Here's to you, John Brown!

For the Five shall take the Four,  
And the Four shall take the Three,  
And as we're in good company  
We'll have a jolly spree,  
Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Four shall take the Three,  
And the Three shall take the Two,  
And as we're in good company.  
We'll drink till all get blue.  
Here's to you, John Brown.

For the Three shall take the Two,  
And the Two shall take the One,  
And as we're in good company  
And we've only just begun!  
Here's to you, John Brown.

For the One shall take the Ace,  
And the Ace shall take them all,  
And as we're in good company  
We won't go home at all.  
Here's to you, John Brown.

---

\* This was sung with terrific emphasis.

To make a night of it—to make it go—I know of no song to compare with this. By then we were well away, the man on the piano leading from one song to another:

A night or two ago  
I thought I'd take a ride,  
And soon Miss Nelly Bright  
Was seated by my side, etc.,

with the chorus,

Jingle bells, jingle bells,  
Jingle all the way,

all clinking our glasses with spoons.

"What sort of a night is it?"—to Norman, who'd been out.

"Dark and stormy."

A mere printed page can never convey the go—the fervour of the choruses. We were a Rowlandson party in the wrong clothes:

Hark away! Hark away!  
Let's be jolly and gay,  
And drink to the joys  
Of the next hunting day.

"Now then, Gray, what about that ghost you used to see up in Woolpit?"

"Ghost! If I don't be gettin' back to the van, Charlotte 'll be comin' up."

At one in the morning we used to see Norman home to his solitary abode in what was known as the parish room. We spent merry evenings in that room watching him making rock. (Think of it now, in this sugar shortage!) Parcels of brown sugar weighing two stones or more stood on the table, a great iron saucepan of toffee bubbled on the fire. To this was added peppermint and lemon essence. Then, placing a mass of brown toffee on a plate to cool, Norman shaped it out in a long, loopy affair, and taking the ends in each hand, threw it over a hook fixed to a rafter, and began steadily pulling it and pulling it, and throwing it over the hook again, until it grew longer and whiter. Then he took some of the brown toffee and pulled this out once to the length. The two cables were then twisted together and cut off in lengths of five or six inches, and laid to cool, and it was then Norman's Rock.

This rock he wheeled on Saturday afternoons up to Harleston in a large, lidded box, fixed on the springs, body and wheels of an old perambulator. One or two of his grandchildren accompanied him to pull it up the hills. One day he brought this vehicle to the studio, and I painted three pretty girls' faces on one side with the lettered advertisement thus: "Eat Norman's Rock and Grow Sweet". On the other side I painted three old maids with sour faces and wrote: "Norman's Rock Cures Sour People".

## NORMAN'S STORY

MANY nights when sitting alone in my room at Shearing's Farm have I left my fireside and stepped down to Norman's dwelling at the end of the garden wall bordering on the street. There—being near eighty then, in 1900—he told me stories of the "Hungry 'Forties" and the bad times farming went through. When he was a boy, his mother, a hard-working Metfield woman, who did washing and farm-work, often took him stone-picking. Bird-scaring was his first job. He never went to school, but he knew all about beasts and the soil. His memories always took him back to his courtship days, his true love being a young widow who lived away in a cottage in the fields. She made leather gloves for hedging and was a good-looker and a fine strong wench, so he said; and he always ended his memories of her with regrets that he didn't marry her. For although he married a good wife in the end, and had many children, the young widow was his real love, and he should have married her.

His recorded miseries of the 'forties were hard to believe. "Many and many's the mornin', bless ye, when I've been up at four in the dark and cowl, and have left home to walk five miles to work, draining common lands"—which meant digging a narrow drain, three feet deep, and laying bushes or pipes. Such work as this went on through a winter at nine shillings a week, when flour was four shillings a stone. He often went off for the day with not enough to eat because the children at home wanted bread.

In 1851 he joined one of the gangs of men who walked to London to work on the "'51 Exhibition", as he called it; and more than once he walked home to Metfield with his saved-up wages—a distance of a hundred miles. He has told me of these journeys, of getting lifts on waggons and sleeping under stacks at night.

At eighty-four he was laid up in bed with a chill, and if I went to see him, I had to read the fifth chapter of St. James, which starts, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl". Afterwards, when nearly ninety, hale and hearty, he was on a ladder gathering apples. It slipped and Norman fell. He did not recover



38" × 45"  
*"The Last of the Fair", a picture with a story in it, bought by the Preston Corporation.*  
 1903. Painted 1902, at twenty-four. See page 142.

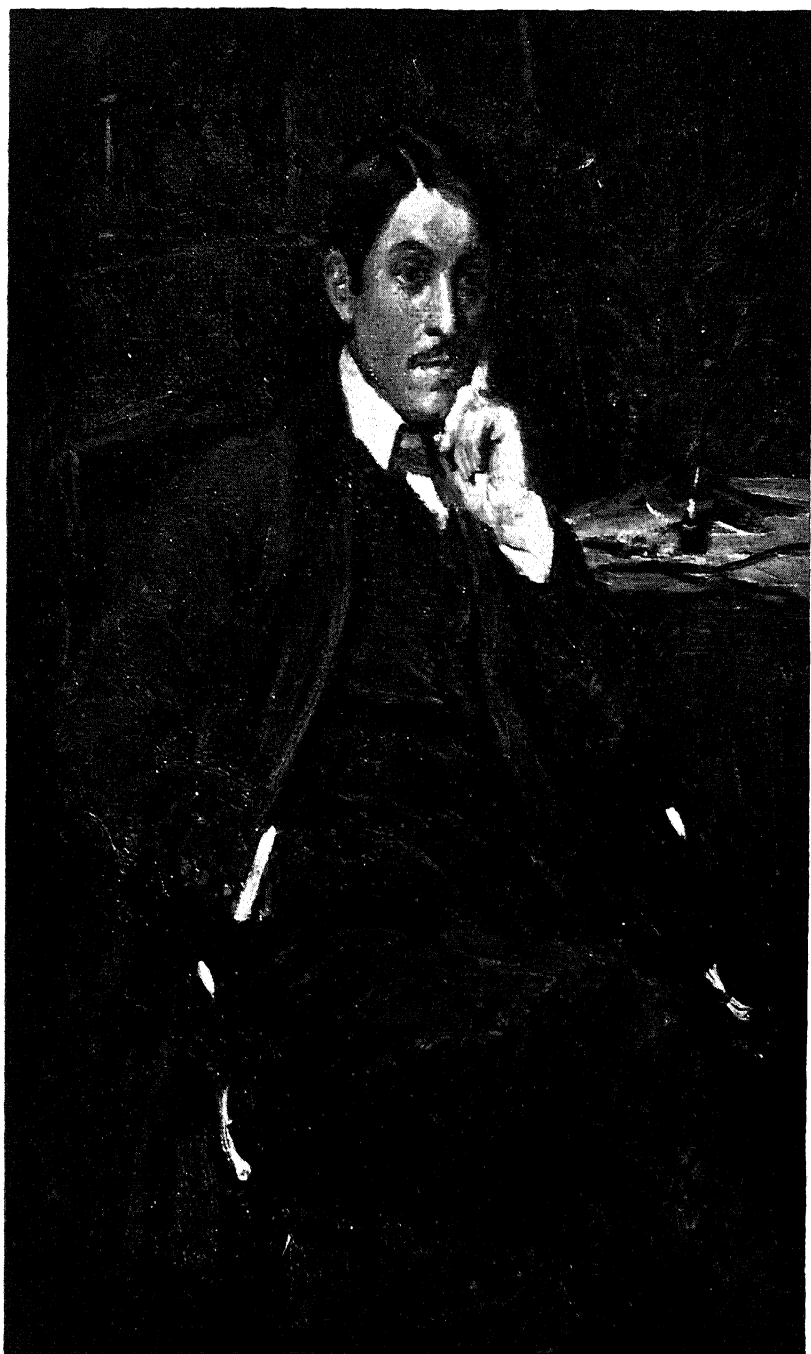


20" × 24"  
*"A Gala Day". "After a lot of champagne and all sorts of eating and drinking I sold it to him for £25."* See pages 111 and 143.



Above: *Myself painting Gray on wooden horse in Mendham Studio. Anatomical plaster casts by Zugel bought in Munich are standing on the old Broadwood piano. Note painting of ponies with skewbald in foreground.*

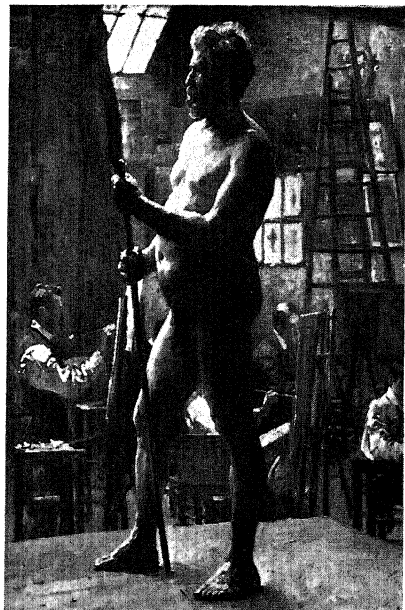
Below: *This is a true portrait of (Nobby) Gray in Tom Smith's scarlet coat.*



*Portrait of Eugène Meister, my melancholy Hungarian sculptor friend of my Paris days, who picked up the yellow chestnut leaf at St. Cloud. Painted in Rue Jacob.*



Left: *Watteau's bust in the Jardin du Luxembourg.*  
 Right: *My Norwich friend in Paris after drinking absinthe.*



*Paintings from the nude. Julian's Atelier, Rue du Dragon. Aged 23, 1901.*



from this. He died just before the First World War, when I was away in Cornwall. He was my staunchest friend, who held horses for me and did odd jobs, long ago, for about eighteen shillings a week. I can hear him now, telling me of the fairs, the booths, the horse-play and fighting that went on at such gatherings, which would have been contemporary with George Borrow.

To carry on a book is even more difficult than picture-making. Each day I wake up and find myself in a different mood, influenced often by the weather. To-day is bright and shimmering. I walk out on to the lawn adjoining the meadows where my pet robin sings in shrill, cheerful notes that pierce right through my soul and disturb my thoughts of yesterday. The chiff-chaff's song mingles with the sound of rustling leaves. The thrushes I fed last winter have increased in my wild, overgrown thorn fences around the paddocks, and sing from their different territories.

An American authoress, I understand, used to take an office high up in New York which looked out on brick walls, and, thus undisturbed, got on with her story. That was a wise plan.

This morning, looking at a list of my pictures hung at the Academy since 1899, I find it brings back too many memories. Given the time and energy, I could describe, almost in detail, how and when I painted them. It would take many volumes, as I find they number two hundred and thirty up to 1949. Earliest efforts are all that I mean to record. There is no sophistry about them. They were done in my twenties, before I had learned wiles and tricks that artists are supposed to know.

Already I have written of the two first, hung in 1899, "Stranded" and "Pike-fishing", also of the doctor's white pony, "An Old Favourite" and "Evening in the Suffolk Marshes", painted before any of them, when I was eighteen. I finally exchanged it for a bay mare which will shortly come into my story.

Looking at the list, I see that in my second year, 1901, three were hung: "A Suffolk Horse Fair", "Feeding the Chickens" and "Woodcutting in October". The last was on the line in the Gem Room and sold. Already I am there in mind at the bend of the river, painting in the North meadow, as we called it. My dog, Friday, is with me. I can hear the pieces of earth plopping into the river behind him as he scrapes his way into a rat's hole in the bank.

Here is the scene. One of those still, mellow, October days with a distant hum of threshing at Denny's farm. Walter Butcher, who sat on the black pony with a halter round its neck, is wearing

Norman's old smock and a real countryman's round, soft felt hat, turned up at the back and down on the front right side. He is posing with a chopper—known as a hook—in his hand. He is supposed to be trimming the long poles cut from the grove of pollard willows along the bend of the river. Seeing him the day before had been an inspiration sudden and swift.

Away with modern ideas about representational painting. The loveliness of that clear, low, October sunlight on the figure at work by the river was beyond even a Sargent. Such scenes are never achieved by the artist, and therefore there is every reason why artists should go on with their efforts to set down and paint beauties which inspire them.

Let me return to the woodcutter. Walter is getting tired as he stoops, holding the long willow-bough in his left hand, the right upheld to make his stroke. Friday, still snorting the dirt from his nostrils, looks round at a splash from a clod flung into the water. The tops of the old pollard willows from which Walter has cut those long limbs show each severance, bright and gleaming in the sun. These Naples-yellow scars are high in key and make the picture. Shadows cast on the grass are long, purply-green strokes, and again the severed poles glimmer at their ends and all along their lengths where each twig has been chopped off. The sky is the blue of October days. Walter Butcher's face is the warmest and most vivid piece of colour, and I am learning a lot.

But the afternoon is drawing swiftly to an end. The shadows lengthen. The model rests. I am almost covered with paint, and Friday with mud.

"Feeding the Chickens", a twenty-four-by-twenty inch, was painted in a meadow by the house, where my mother kept scores of fowls. To see Teddy Holmes, in a wide-brimmed sun-hat, feeding them as they clustered around him, all parti-coloured and brilliantly lit, was enough. Words fail when I try to write how later I was to paint all this colour which was just beginning to dawn on me. La Thangue was one of my gods then. His pictures taught me to see such subjects.

## LAVENHAM HORSE FAIR

I HAVE told of a water-colour, "A Suffolk Horse Fair", which I sold for twenty-five pounds, and how I boasted of its sale on one of my visits to the artists in the room at Page Bros. ("Four of those, Alfred, make a hundred quid," said one of them.)

This water-colour was the design for my first big canvas, eighty by fifty inches. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Painting so large a picture from a water-colour was asking for trouble. I worked away at it all through the winter. The tone of the grass gave me the same trouble as it does to-day. I was wretched. But my worst hindrance was the roan colt coming out of the picture. That ambitious effort should have taught me my limitations. I found it skied in the last room of the Academy. Now it is hanging in the Norwich Art Gallery, presented by a kind donor who bought it from someone who bought it from me for a song.

Lavenham Horse Fair. What a sight! This famous fair of heavy draught-horses eclipsed anything of its kind I had ever seen. The Swan was then unaltered, and not the swell place it is to-day. I got a room there in spite of its being packed with a breed of men long since gone: men with fat jowls, wearing wide-brimmed bowlers or half-high hats, who came from London to buy heavy horses for London work—for railway companies' vans, brewers' drays and a host of other trades.

Gray and his son came from Walsham-le-Willows, an old haunt of theirs. It was through them that I went to see this wonderful sight. The day started well with rashers of Suffolk-cured bacon—a pleasant detail to remember. The Grays called for me soon after, and I saw the scenes which started me off painting horse fairs.

We went from inn-yard to inn-yard, where straw lay strewn on the ground, and those well-fed, clean-shaven, purple-faced men already were seeing horses trotted up and down in the yards, in the main street, in the lesser streets, on a green and up near the great church with its tall tower.

I see the powerful quarters of those great cart-horses standing in rows in market-place and yard, their manes and tails plaited with straw and braided with blue, yellow and scarlet ribbons.

Their action when trotted out was as vigorous as that of the hackney. Their necks were "clothed in thunder", their hooves sounded in the street while a man running behind bustled them with the end of a long, brass-bound whip.

Long ago I saw similar doings in France, where a whole town would be filled with dapple grey Percherons, those on show dashing past in hand at full trot. Magnificent! a sight for the gods! Gone are such scenes; gone are the horses.

Last week every class of man and woman swarmed in the Ascot enclosures and saw the Royal procession of only three or four carriages, drawn mostly by Dutch horses, pass up the course each day. And they saw seven French horses out of eight gallop the two-and-a-half miles for the Gold Cup, won by Arbar. While they watched and betted on the efforts of those last specimens of the disappearing, familiar beasts called horses, hundreds were either being killed in abattoirs, or suffering on long railway journeys, or pitched about on the sea in the holds of cattle-boats. Many of those killed here are eaten by ourselves, many by cats, dogs and "the greyhounds".

A shortage of petrol would show us that there are now, in 1948, not enough horses left in Britain to cultivate Norfolk and Suffolk.

Let us for a moment think of the millions of tons of tall, healthy-grown straw—bright, fibrous, lasting fifty years in thatch—that have for centuries been put back on the land from yards where cart-horses, cattle and pigs have saturated and stamped it down, year in, year out, to be carted and spread on the land. To-day we even burn straw, and are farming on all those centuries' accumulation of horse, cattle and sheep manure that has made and kept the soil in heart. Its virtues, its effects, will remain yet awhile, but may gradually die unless replenished as before.

In 1902 came "The Vagabonds", another ambitious canvas, eighty by fifty inches! This picture, enlarged from a water-colour, was carried through with gouache studies done on grey paper on the spot—that spot being a by-road leading to Middleton Hall, exactly where, as children, we had seen the gypsy encampment. The distance we ran in scared flight back to the governess from that dreaded glimpse of the gypsies was later to be the distance taken up in the lane by the horses and ponies coming along it which was my picture. As I stood there painting, I recalled the dark man with clay pipe making baskets, in company with his wife and children. I smelt the wood-smoke from his fire as plainly as I smelt the rotting poplar leaves in the grass around me when I was making my studies twenty years later.

It was a full mile from the studio, my scene in the lane—just past the finger-post where forks went left and right. "The Vagabonds" was meant to be a dreary, desolate picture. It never was. Here is the scene.

A grass-bordered lane curving away between fences and tall poplar-trees; long puddles in the cart-tracks reflecting the sky. Coming along the lane is a straggling group of horses and gypsies, one figure seated in a cart silhouetted against the sky in the centre, another riding, bringing up the rear. What a forlorn picture they made! Mine would never look like that if I stood there for years. Only as a failure is it worthy of description. But my heart goes out to it as I recall the hours of work in the lane.

Sydney Denny, a farmer (long since dead), came for the cows each afternoon about four, and got so used to our doings in the lane that he took no notice of us as we stood there either with one, two, three or more horses, or with the cart and my mother's pony harnessed in it. This was a mere beginning. The effort came when, alone in the studio with my outdoor studies, I faced the canvas day after day until the last dead leaf in the foreground was painted. I spared no pains. I had seen "Colt-hunting in the New Forest" by Lucy Kemp Welch, an enormous canvas, at the Academy that year. The picture appeared in every illustrated paper. It was all the talk. My aunts talked of it. My uncle, who read Rider Haggard, Marie Corelli, and went to London to see Irving and the Doré Gallery, had seen it. I was out to beat it, whatever the cost.

"The Vagabonds" came home after a journey to Liverpool and other Art Galleries. It strayed around like this for some time until I sold it for thirty pounds when hard up. In the summer of 1947, when in Norfolk, I saw it covering half a wall in the dining-room of an old and loyal friend. Exhibited in 1902, my studies for it were made in the lane during November 1901. Thinking about this as I looked at the picture, the present faded out, and for a brief spell I was again at the spot where I had stood forty-six years ago. Then I recalled how, working late one evening, the sky cleared to a bright afterglow. There was frost in the air, and the puddles reflected the light. The landscape darkened; horses and figures grew darker still; poplars along the roadside were black against the sunset. Here was the inspiration for another picture which was bought in an Ipswich Exhibition for the Art Gallery there. Never was I more in need of money.

CHAPTER XXIX

ROYAL ACADEMY PICTURES OF 1903

LOOKING at my list of R.A. pictures, "The Gossips" is next: Nobby Gray, Charlotte and Fred by the caravan, portraits, each one of the group. The picture, 24 × 20, hung in the large room, and was sold.

Then comes 1903. Five works hung out of six. Outsiders could send six at that time. "The Last of the Fair", a picture with a story in it, bought by the Preston Corporation for £150. A winter fair, cold and grey. A tired boy—Jimmy Betts—asleep between the shafts of the cart (I posed him in the studio for this). A heap of halters lies there. Three ponies and a donkey are standing around, their halter-ends in his hand.

Strangely enough, only a few grey days happened whilst painting this, and sending-in day was approaching. The donkey in the foreground was not finished. It had to be done. Fred Gray brought it up to the stack-yard opposite the studio at 6.30 in the morning. My easel and canvas were got out, and the donkey was finished before the sun rose. Later, that particular day became grey—I need not have risen so early. But when painting, seize the moment—that has been my motto.

The next picture of the five was "Sale by Auction, Michaelmas", 44 × 34 inches. Where can this be now? Always I wanted to paint a farm sale at Michaelmas. The horses with their tails plaited with straw and ribbons; a background of stacks, buildings, trees; a grey day. Norman is there, clean-shaven. The old boy, after much persuasion, shaved off his all-round beard for the first time, appearing in sleeve waistcoat and cords.

Not until he had been dressed in a complete suit of grey check, with tight trousers, black velvet collar, cuffs and lapels, did I ever see Norman really concerned. As he stood in front of the studio mirror looking like a horse coper, he murmured, "Lord, master Alfred! what a 'morkum' you're makin' o' me!"

"A Country Horse Fair." Bright sun, tents, crowds, and a black horse hustled by one man and held by another. For this Gray Junior dressed himself in one of those hikey dealer's suits which were made for me to my measurements at a particular kind of tailor's in Norwich. A vanished type, those masterful horse-dealers. They roused a horse, shaking a stiff, pink, cambric

flag in its face, the horse on a long halter to give it play. A fellow in velvet and checks shouted, "Lord Wellington didn't ride one like 'im in the battle of Waterloo! Every time he sets 'is foot 'e strikes a milestone!"

Since the horse became man's friend, deception and fraud too often have come into a horse deal. At these fairs a doped horse might be sold to an unsuspecting baker or grocer. Later he could not get it into the cart. If he did, it kicked the cart to bits, or maybe it jogged on with him and his goods until it suddenly stopped. "Thus far, and no farther." Cajoling failed. The whip ended it, and the cart was in the ditch.

Amongst my five Academy pictures of 1903 I see "A Gala Day", and reproduce it showing Norman, Dan Betts, Hoppy Daniels and friends of the past. It was not a large painting, and was hung on the line in the Gem Room. When staying with an alderman of Preston, in a weak moment, after a lot of champagne and all sorts of eating and drinking in the Hodder Bridge Hotel, I sold it to him for twenty-five pounds.

This old friend always bought for half the figure I named, yet he was generous in his hospitality. He took me about with a pair of bay horses in an open carriage, driven by an ancient coachman in pale-blue livery. His great idea was to drive to some beauty spot on a fast-running river where there awaited, in a proper-looking room, in a proper-looking hotel, near an arched bridge, a sumptuous lunch of salmon and cold duck and strawberries and cream, with bottles of champagne. His two sons-in-law ably helped in this. What feasting! I have stayed with him at Loch Lomond, in Glasgow, in Carlisle, at the Stronachlachter Hotel on Lake Katrine, and survived all the junketings.

"Now, Munnings," he would say, looking the picture of misery, "doan't hurt me. Let me buy the picture; I can't afford a penny more. Coom, ah'll tell thee what ah'll do: ah'll mak' it guineas."

"A Gala Day" was left in his will to the Preston Art Gallery, where it keeps company with "The Last of the Fair". Pale Danny Betts sleeps on a winter's day in the Fair. In "A Gala Day" he wears a wide sun-hat shading his face; and he eats an orange while his sister Tilly is peeling hers.

The last of these five of 1903 is "The Wood-cutter"—the best. It is autumn; old Norman is in his smock, clearing a small maple-wood thicket. I enjoyed my work when doing this. The scene was there; the old man posed well for hours; the yellow-starred leaves traced patterns in the October sun. How beautiful it looked! Eyes closed for a last glimpse of the thicket of maple at the top of the hill leading to St. Margarets. It fades and is gone.

## MUSIC—A BAY MARE

**T**O-DAY I opened the top drawers of a bookcase bureau which has stood in this room since I bought the house, before that at Swainsthorpe for six years, and farther back still at Mendham. A vast accumulation of odds and ends is hoarded in those drawers. Taking me to the most far-off days is a case with a medal in it, which lies fitting into dark-blue velvet. In low relief on the medal is a head of Queen Victoria. So exquisite is the workmanship that I wonder who did it. "Victoria, by the grace of God; Queen and Empress, 1897", it is inscribed. Around the edge is written: "Alfred J. Munnings; subject 14.B. 1898". A South Kensington award, this was gained in the Norwich School of Art for a painting in oils of the interior of the Antique Room.

Thus does one suddenly arrive back at an early date lying hidden in a drawer. Among masses of mementoes dates are few. Letters bearing only the day of the month puzzled and frustrated me until I came on a picture postcard from the Musée du Luxemburg: "Lucien Simon: La Procession". Written at the edge in ink: "Kindest regards from yours, Tom Phelan, Paris 28.3.07".

I see Phelan's clean-shaven Irish face and hear his Australian-Cockney accent as plainly as if he were sitting in the chair opposite as I write. A long-suffering, kindly soul who saved and saved his money, gained at scene-painting in New York, until he could come to Paris and work at Julian's. The artist who shared his garret studio cleared out and stole all his money, and Phelan had to return to New York and begin again.

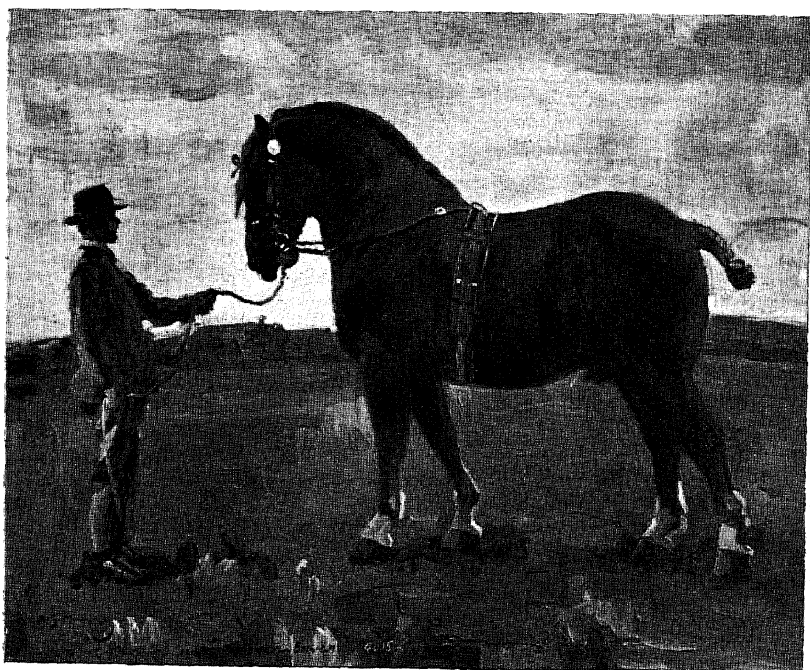
I find, and stare at, a little Kodak snapshot. It is of myself, dressed in one of those hikey-dealer's suits, holding a horse outside my studio. There is an elder-bush in bloom behind us. The pieces of the puzzle are fitting together. I first went to Julian's as an adventure in, I believe, 1904—a date reminiscent of a beautiful port vintage. Many a stained cork bearing the stamp "Cockburn, 1904" have I drawn in my cellar since that date.

The postcard of Lucien Simon's picture, reminding me of my first visit to Paris, fits in with the photograph of myself and the mare, Music, as she was called. When I went to study in Paris





Left: *Gerald Stones* drawn by myself.  
 Right: *Stones' drawing of me the morning after a jolly night in Norwich.*



*My brother's Suffolk Stallion "Mendham Ensign" and Fred Pretty, painted at Kett's Farm, Melfield.*



*Water-colour of old Charlotte Gray.*



*My landlord lawyer friend at Norwich. "The rooms were a new step in my painting life. There were all sorts of people to paint and life was pleasant."*

it was early spring and the weather bitterly cold. The mare being clipped, I hesitated about turning her out to grass. David Johnson, who was taking her to keep, said, "You can't hurt horses if you put them out where there's shelter from the wind and give them plenty of good hay". We let her go in his large pastures. Seeing some colts at the bottom of the slope, she went off to them full gallop. She tried to pull up, slipped, turned a somersault, got up, had a good roll and joined the others. Horses love company. I left her happy.

This bay mare, my second equine acquisition, was not bought by cheque, but in exchange for my earliest large picture, "In the Suffolk Marshes", which was skied in the first year I sent to the Royal Academy. Her owner, a dapper little man, with round, yellowish face and dark hair, small moustache and a beady glass eye, was the landlord of the Trowel and Hammer on the outskirts of Norwich. Somewhat altered, it still stands on the right at the top of St. Stephen's before the roads fork left and right for Ipswich and Newmarket.

The landlord's name was Billy Brown, and he wore horsey pepper-and-salt clothes. His coat with tails, his brown leggings, tight and shiny, and a bowler, were distinctive features of his appearance, and mostly his hands were in the front pockets usual in riding-breeches. His wife's hair remained in curl-papers all day until the evening; and Nelly, almost her double, was the trusty, patient barmaid. These three portraits are yet distinct, and will remain so as long as my memory functions.

On Saturdays farmers put their horses and carts there, the inn being just outside the city gates. It was in the snuggerly or small bar that my deal took place. Billy Brown had tried his luck with the Dunston Harriers, and found that it was easier to look horsey than to be a horseman. His wife was against it, and this mare, Music, wanted work. She was "hot", and he didn't enjoy his Sunday rides with Dicky Dowson and Paddy Cox. These were bookmakers of fame in those days. They rode their horses in opulence on Sabbath mornings to such places as Barford Cock, Costessey Falcon or Thorpe Gardens, puffing large cigars as they jogged along. Paddy Cox rode seventeen stone.

What became of "The Suffolk Marshes" picture I do not know. Billy Brown has departed, as have his wife and Nelly. Two years afterwards I took another trip abroad and sold the mare, and she carried the whip of the Suffolk Staghounds; my conscience troubles me as I look at the photograph.

This bay mare was my first hunter to be seriously used as a model. It was through her that I conceived the stable embellish-

ments to the Mendham studio. The west end of this carpenter's shop contained an open shed. The shed front was boarded up, and a loose box and passage made, with a half-door opening into the studio. The cornbin and hay stood in the wide passage space between, and when the half-door was open my mare could watch her owner at work over the loose-box partition. This was pleasant company. Billy's mare that wanted work became a friend. Norman was groom when Fred Gray was on summer rounds with his father. In the winter, when I rode most, Fred was there, while Norman did the fire and garden and all but painted the pictures.

Music was a well-bred bay mare. My father's groom, Saxby, approved.

"That's more the height," said he.

She was 15.2 hands, no more. Although she was hot, and shied at every bird flying out of a hedge, and though she was as quick as an eel, I spent many happy hours on her back. I was riding her from Harleston Swan on the night when, as I have related, she shied at the moon in a puddle and shot me off. I can see her now in the moonlight, patiently waiting in the road at the studio after my two-mile walk home. I was young, and she taught me a lot in riding and painting. With her I first began to paint a clipped-out horse on a winter day against a landscape background. The hours and hours this poor mare stood for me while I struggled with paint on canvas or in water-colour on paper were endless.

Finding out a new theme was a thrill—the realisation of undreamt-of possibilities was happening. My next move was to find a scarlet coat.

Tom Smith, who for a period hunted the Norwich Staghounds, sold me his scarlet coat and cap for a fiver. Long ago in the nineties there was a hard-riding, hard-living Captain Lee Barber, known as "The Shaver", who used to ride in the Grand National. Whatever may have been his fate—whether dead or alive—there, in a Norwich shop full of jewellery, watches and clothes, was all his riding kit. The coats and white breeches—or some of them, for there were dozens—became my property. I still have them, and have used them for years to paint or to ride in.

Hanging in a spare room here with other forgotten pictures is one of Gray in Tom Smith's coat. "The Meet at the Bell", it was called when shown at the Academy in 1906. A group of huntsmen and hounds fills the whole of the huge canvas. Gray's portrait is so like him that I grow melancholy when I look at it;

I'm back in the past with ghosts. His mount, a big chestnut thoroughbred, belonged to a friend. The vermillion has stood, and the scarlet coat looks as bright as when painted over forty years ago.

At the first rehearsal, Gray was looking at himself in the large studio mirror. Then he turned round. Seeing him fully dressed in that English costume, second to none, would have tempted the dullest artist who ever held a brush. His image haunts me still. I should have painted him till he or I died. All comes back: the wooden horse discarded; the sortie to a spinney nearby; Gray in scarlet on a clipped horse in the wood. A picture! My learning began.

## A BOND STREET DEALER

YESTERDAY, when a Bond Street picture-dealer suddenly began to pour forth lines which lasted some minutes, my wonder grew as he closed his dramatic performance thus :

What then? Shall we sit idly down and say  
The night hath come: for it is no longer day?  
The night hath not yet come; we are not quite  
Cut off from labour by the failing light;  
Something remains for us to do or dare;  
Even the oldest tree some fruit must bear.

For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress,  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

This was his reply to me after I had declared that I was too old to accept further commissions or paint any more large pictures. Afterwards I took up my Longfellow and found that I had missed the beauties of "The Wreck of the *Hesperus*".

When J. J. Shannon, R.A., the portrait-painter, was knighted, Orpen gave a small dinner-party in his honour at the Arts Club. Shannon was paralysed through a fall from a horse, and could not walk; he was wheeled everywhere in his chair. On that day the King had knighted him in his chair at the Palace. In responding to Orpen's speech and toast, he asked if he might recite to us "The Wreck of the *Hesperus*" as he used to recite it to his mother when a boy in the backwoods of New England. In the true dialect, he gave the lines as only an artist could. I can hear him still as I write :

And fast through the midnight dark and drear,  
Through the whistling sleet and snow,  
Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept  
Towards the reef of Norman's Woe.

And ever the fitful gusts between  
A sound came from the land;  
It was the sound of the trampling surf  
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.

Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,  
 With the masts went by the board;  
 Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,  
 Ho! ho! the breakers roared.

Such was the wreck of the *Hesperus*,  
 In the midnight and the snow.  
 Christ save us all from a death like this  
 On the reef of Norman's Woe.

The primitive simplicity of the lines and Shannon's rendering of them would silence all criticism. His eyes shone as he told the story, almost bringing us to tears, and afterwards we sat in the spell he had created—his mind far away in the home of his boyhood in the backwoods of New England.

No wonder the ballad was popular at penny readings and published in elocution books. I recalled how, in my own youth, I had stood quaking in elocution class at school waiting for my turn to recite it. The title may have inspired my young mind, but how could I tell such a story? Had a master in the school been stirred by the drama, and could have read it in style, what an uplift our imaginations would have gained!

My favourite of Longfellow's used to be "The Norman Baron". What lines these are:

In this fight was Death the gainer,  
 Spite of vassal and retainer,  
 And the lands his sires had plundered,  
 Written in the Doomsday Book.

A poem which appealed to romantic boys long ago was "The Battle of Hohenlinden", written by a poet who lived in the days of murderous charges of massed cavalry. I longed to recite "Hohenlinden", yet when my chance came I failed to give the lines in the grand manner:

On Linden when the sun was low  
 All bloodless lay the untrodden snow  
 And dark as winter was the flow  
 Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

If a less famous poet than some, Campbell achieved greatness in that moving piece.

## SEEING AN ARTIST AT WORK

VERSES learned in youth will remain in my memory till I die. Often as I work, one runs in my head, faint or strong, as the painting goes. As late as 1912, reading Masfield's "Everlasting Mercy", I remembered many of the passages which I make use of at times.

For instance, lying like a sluggard in bed, wasting moments, deciding what my day shall be, I spring up with the line on my lips: "That's what I'll do, I cried aloud". Often when I stand looking at a picture where something drastic has to happen, I seize my brushes and palette with those words on my lips, and as like as not I either spoil the picture or pull it round. It is a useful, heartening line, so is the following one in that poem.

Pictures are strange baffling things. A joy and a curse. The furious impulse to get a thing going is inexplicable. When my wife was away hunting in Exmoor, an artist friend who could ride stayed with me for weeks. I inveigled him into wasting time. We rode all day or wandered along the river-bank and bathed. One day, near Stoke-by-Nayland, we were riding along a lane. There in a meadow sat an artist at work, his white umbrella fixed, a quiet figure in a peaceful scene. My friend suddenly became the picture of misery—frustration.

"Alfred," he said, "to hell with all this bloody riding and fooling about. I'm going to start work. You and I will begin painting to-morrow."

The sight of that artist quietly at work, intent on his object, had smitten our consciences.

Did our work bring all joy? When painting out of doors, the mere squeezing of colours on the palette, taking up the brushes, finding the centre of the scene, irritates and retards the impatient soul. The impulse is held back.

Long ago I took my paint-box, easel and canvas with me to that lithographic artists' room in Norwich on a Thursday before the Easter holidays, and the same evening caught a train, carrying all my belongings, and was met at Harleston station by Saxby with the horse and trap. On a clear, bright Good Friday morning, taking food and drink and all my gear in the old boat, I rowed down that bright blue river with pale, dead reeds and



sedges on either side. Pollard willows and saplings shone, full of sap, almost crimson at their tops.

What joy! Here was I, ready for the fray. Where should I pull up and begin? My spot was soon found. Marsh marigolds were dotted on the green marsh, and warblers sang. I tied and fixed the boat, set the easel and canvas. Like any other artist about to begin, I was filled with a breathless ecstasy. I opened my box, and behold, it was filled with stones!

In an age of practical jokes, could a joke be more cruel and unscrupulous than this? My utter despair, my misery were unbearable. The blow hit me hard. What could I do? I was utterly beaten. The bitter momentary disappointment is indescribable even to-day. Those fellow artists in the artists' room had played a dirty trick!

Once on Exmoor, not long ago, I arrived by car at Cloud Farm to paint Bagsworthy Water, some twelve miles away, and found I had forgotten my brushes. I have developed the habit of carrying my brushes separately in a brown-paper roll. A box holds a miserable handful, and I like at least one big brush among the twenty or thirty I choose to take. With no brushes, I viciously chewed the ends of pieces of wood, tied paint-rags on sticks, sought out minute fir-cones washed down in spate to the stream's bank, some of these matted with fine strands of grass. A teasele was a grand thing on such an occasion. Cursing and raging—not to be beaten, I found that with these tools I could do a lot, and the final result was much the same as if I had used brushes. I returned next day. Conditions were the same. I sat in the same place near the roaring foam. I made the same design and painted another picture; this time with brushes. Afterwards, placing the two canvases side by side, and standing back to look, they appeared exactly the same, four yards away.

But to my story. To add to these memories of disappointments, joys and miseries, only one of my pictures was hung at the Academy in 1904—the Cockburn port year. It was called "Whitsuntide". I have told in an earlier chapter how I painted a grey mare and foal in a field of buttercups when all went well, when Norman held the mare and looked after me. Whitsuntide weather. Sunlight, peace; no forgotten brushes. I never dreamed when I stood in that yellow field, painting, watching the little foal playing and scampering round its mother, that the picture was to save me from a narrow shave. Since I began sending my pictures in 1898 I never had them all out, and this was the single occasion when I had only a solitary picture on the walls. It was a nasty jar, which I remember when looking at a field of buttercups.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### I GO TO PARIS

WHAT made me go to Paris then, I am now unable to say. I had many meetings with an older artist who had been there—Edward Elliot, a swell bachelor with side-whiskers, of some sixty summers, who lived with his maiden sister at Acle, and always wore a bowler, and was to be found in the bar of the Castle Hotel, Norwich, on Saturday mornings. It was here that Sam and Jim Boswell and other worthies congregated, and got merry and talked and talked, and were served by two capable (not too young) barmaids.

The whole idea of the trip to Paris was inaugurated in this bar.

Drinks were served and went round again. Edward Elliot, going back to the days of his youth, painted glowing word-pictures of the life at the Atelier Julian in the Rue du Dragon, until we all decided to go. As his mind became fired with stimulants, he not only told us stories of student days but also gave us advice from the storehouse of his experiences. Finally I decided to go with a bohemian soul; a slack, slothful idler who shall be nameless. With this loungeur, older than myself, whose father, in his youth, had been a famous frame-maker and gilder for the later Norwich School and whose father before him had made frames for Cotman and Crome and the rest, I finally went to Paris.

Often, when well over the line, did the fellow tell me how J. J. Cotman, the son of John Sell, used to sleep off the fumes under his father's bench after a debauch. This may have been exaggerated. He who recounted the story did likewise in the dim recesses of Notre Dame; for once we found him there fast asleep.

Through my fool of a friend, who thought he could speak French, we were taken by a French jehu to a strange and awful street in the worst part of the Latin Quarter, the Rue Jacque. My friend and guide had failed to pronounce "Jacob" (for we were going to the Hotel Jacob in the Rue Jacob), and finally we arrived at the Hotel Jacque, somewhere near the Pantheon, where we first met bugs in ancient, smelly bedrooms—and ate horseflesh, I am sure. It was not until we found Julian's atelier, and asked where the Hotel Jacob was, that we discovered how the error was made.

Finally we found ourselves occupying a large old bedroom opening on to an outside gallery. This yard of the Hotel Jacob was smaller, though similar in style to the yard of the old London inn, the George, in the Borough. Here we had queer adventures and again met bugs, and once, after seeing a dead man in the morgue with a ghastly bullet-wound in his forehead and days of bearded growth on his face, we spent an awesome night. Some of us, returning from Le Rat Mort, passing over a bridge long after midnight, heard an ominous splash in the dark water below.

"There you are," said Scotty, a cadaverous Glasgow student; "they've thrown a dead body into the water!"

That night my hair stood on end. I was thinking of Poe's story of the murders in the Rue Morgue. To me these streets were sinister at night.

Later, when my Norwich friend went home through lack of means, a queer fish named Fitzpatrick, who was in the Berlitz School, and who became a Judge in the Sudan or somewhere, shared this room with me. He was a good-looking, well-bred Irish fellow, and always wore a bowler and a nice grey plaid suit. His looks were unmistakable. One evening, after some adventures on the river, he planned at the same time each night from then on to give a yell or scream that would awaken and curdle the blood of those asleep in this haunted hotel. Such a frightful piercing yell, which was the cry of a man stabbed! The French windows were open, and this sudden yell in the night sounded so horrible that my own hair was raised in terror. At once doors were opened. Heads came out of windows. Voices sounded all about. Waiters came down and looked about the yard. Not another sound! The place was still as death.

Fitzpatrick carried on with this foolery until he thought it best to end it. Nothing was found out. He used to put his head out and ask what it was.

Once when going to the Bal Bullier, after drinking in a wine-shop, we were all delayed because a certain Captain Warden, who had been through the South African War and taken to art, refused to go to the *bal* unless Fitzpatrick put his bowler on straight and not at an angle. The Irishman refused to do so. The rest begged him to straighten his hat, and then called on Warden to alter his decision. Both were firm. This went on until Fitzpatrick gave in.

The waltzing at the Bal Bullier was wonderful, fast, jaunty and gay; the girls wore large hats, long skirts, tight waists and high collars. There bearded Frenchmen twirled and whirled until one became giddy looking on.

I love a waltz. I learned to waltz under a very old-fashioned, sprightly old lady who taught dancing in Norwich. "One, two, three . . . one, two, three," she used to say, and off we went to the piano, played by her husband. The waltz is the best of all dances. I see a vision of autumn leaves at Saint Cloud;—a cuirassiers' band playing a lovely waltz—we idly sipping frothy chocolate. Eugène Meister, a Hungarian sculptor without a penny, had been walking with me in the park of the Château. We spoke little; we could use only French in common, and his French was even more limited than mine. He had picked up a large, perfect, yellow horse-chestnut leaf. Looking at me with melancholy brown eyes, he said, "Munnings, *elle est très, très belle.*"

"*Ah, oui, très belle,*" said I, and we sighed and walked on to hear the band by the barracks and drink sweet chocolate near the river.

Three or four of us would sometimes settle to go to Versailles by river or rail. A week-day would be chosen, Saturdays and Sundays being too crowded. If the October sun shone we were attracted to the terrace and gardens, steeped in the mellow warmth of autumn. Yellow leaves, floating in half-circled patterns, lay on still surfaces of fountain-basins, which reflected garlanded groups of fat cupids in bronze.

The Trianons were the homes of cupids. Some were modelled by a master hand who outshone the rest. We halted by a lovely goddess posed against a background of yellow leaves. Yellow leaves fell fluttering to the ground. Reposeful, calm, gentle melancholy existed in the walks among the bosquets. We wandered on down to wider fountain-basins and longer avenues, always enjoying a cheap and excellent *déjeuner* at the restaurant garden near the Neptune Basin. Such days were too perfect to be true. No income tax; no letters.

Our only trouble was painting the nude in Julian's. Each study was always better than the last. A fresh model posed for a fortnight—long enough if one worked and went the right way about it. Some of the men were doing wonderful painting. Hanging on those walls, covered below the picture-line with palette scrapings, were many canvases by students of the past who had won awards.

## SCULPTURE AT THE LUXEMBOURG

I NEVER tire of my garden. This morning is bright. Light flashes in the laurels. The sound of the rustling leaves of an old plane-tree mingle with the sighs of its neighbour, a tall wellingtonia. Each day, with the wind north-west, there is a repetition of the same sounds. The predominant note comes from the top branches of the large oak near the gate. Hidden in its leafy greenery the insistent chiff-chaff goes on with scarcely a break. I will one day time him by my watch, and find out how many chirps he makes to the minute, and how many in a day.

This is a far cry from Paris of 1904. I came into this room, sat down and dispersed a disbelief that I was ever there. Sounds of the leaves become a mere background to memories which come forward. I see the statue of Danton in the Boulevard St. Germain—his arm raised on high, his thick lips apart as he rolls out, "The first thing for the people after bread is education."

That is the form of sculpture I love: a dramatic moment of the past expressed in bronze. What a magnificent figure on a worthy pedestal! (How different from the plain, starved, post-looking, white affair on which Roosevelt stands in Grosvenor Square.)

Paris is full of these glories of sculpture. On many a Saturday we journeyed from Place to Square; to the Tuileries and gardens of the Luxembourg, gazing at this statue and that, holding art conferences. Perhaps Marshal Ney was favourite. It may be that his courageous and romantic career counted a lot; for these rounds might include a look in at the Invalides. Who would not succumb to glories of the Empire after such a visit?

In the Sculpture Hall of the Luxembourg we drifted from one lovely nude to another, our minds unassailed by modern abortions. Few disturbing thoughts had occurred in Paris, so far as we were concerned, about the painting of pictures. Such violent reaction against prettiness has taken place since then that one wishes the old Bougereau nudes back again to make sure whether they were so utterly bad.

On my later visits to Paris I found the Luxembourg Galleries filling with strange work. Distorted drolleries were spreading everywhere, except in parts of the Louvre. It gives me more pleasure to recall those Saturdays and Sundays in the autumn of

1904 than my later visits to old haunts. Better than reading stories or histories, better even than anything a student could do, were these happy hours spent among the French pictures of that period. If our desires were for pictures and sculpture rather than St. Cloud or Versailles, we could satisfy them in abundance in Paris. Our minds, too, were not then disturbed by fast and crazy motor traffic, or our nostrils filled with petrol fumes, which increase in virulence until trees wither and die on the boulevards. Young people to-day can never imagine what Paris was like so long ago.

Julian's in the Rue du Dragon soon became a second home. It freed us from Morgue-created terrors. All were friends. Some advanced students were painting the most wonderful studies. Large canvases surprised us with their truth, drawing and colour.

The enormous ground-floor atelier where I worked was visited then by two professors, M. Bachet and M. Schommer. Bougereau came seldom, only to say, "*Pas mal*". At the far end the sculptors were at work. The walls were covered below with palette scrapings, and above with paintings of the nude. Two of these, framed and glazed, were masterpieces by a past student who died young.

On certain Mondays models turned up to be chosen for the next fortnight. Each mounted the throne, one after the other, amid cries of approval or dissent. I felt sorry for the poor women who were too unattractive to please. In this choosing one noticed how different in colour and tint all these models were. Race was the reason. Some were white, others brown, yellow or even pale green.

Ranging from aged and middle-aged to young, the students were from all countries. The Americans were the richer, and often occupied fine studios, living in state and luxury, while other fellows barely existed. Seventy odd pounds in Barclay's Bank at Harlestone filled me with all the confidence I needed. The Hotel Jacob cost little; we all ate our *déjeuner* at some place on the Boulevard St. Germain. Youth, enthusiasm and small expenses bore us along week by week.

Versailles was our place on a fine day. If dull, or if the mood seized us, we went through the Palace and talked of Marie Antoinette and the Revolution. Always we found our way to the gallery where huge battle-pictures hung, painted by Alphonse de Neuville and Aimé Morot, two artists famous in the days of 1870.

What pictures these were! The "Charge of the Cuirassiers"

at Reichshoffen measured thirty feet in length. The wounded grey horse on its back in the foreground is life-size. What arguments there were in front of these canvases!

A callous, modern-minded American would draw: "But . . . see . . . these shure are oanlee ill-us-traytions."

"Illustrations be damned!" said I, full of the terrific achievement and vast knowledge displayed in these great pictures.

I still have three photographs of Morot's battle charges of 1870 framed here; and, often looking at them, I recall how I never could find the gallery over the chapel where the largest hung. Going up to an attendant, I would begin: "*Monsieur, s'il vous plaît, ou est le tableau par Aimé Morot, etc., etc.?*", which, of course, the attendant failed to understand. Then I tried again, or even twice. Suddenly the fellow would brighten and say, "*Ah, oui, Monsieur! Ah, oui, je comprends, etc.*"

Then I would find the stairs and arrive breathless in front of the "Charge of the Cuirassiers", astounded for the twentieth time. I was spellbound at every visit, though others were never impressed. Thus do we differ in our outlook.

As highbrows gloat and blink at a meaningless mix-up in a frame which is the only sound part of it, this heroic attempt at an heroic subject is despised and forgotten. Such an effort requires a lifetime's study and knowledge. Drawing is the first item in the artist's list of accomplishments. Without that item it would be useless for a man to begin such a task. Only an artist born of a military nation could conceive the tragic moment—the mad rush, the fury, the fright, all shown on this wide canvas. I wondered where all Morot's first drawings and designs would be. How large were they? How did he paint the studies for the wounded horses?

The answer to this was given me when, on a later visit to Paris, I was shown some marvellously set-up models of horses in galloping positions, which were made by the only specialist of that day. A chestnut and bay, saddled and bridled and posed at a gallop, stood in a friend's studio where I was often invited during my stays at Chantilly in the 1920's. These were the remnants of the studio properties of Détaillé; their heads, necks and limbs movable, like a lay-figure. Yet they were covered in their skin, with mane, tail and full glass eye all complete.

These blissful Paris experiences must be ended. The last scene of many—a studio in the Rue de Seine. A dark and stinking stone stair led up and up until, with shaking thighs, breathless and beaten, one arrived and knocked at a door on a stone

landing. Three artists occupied this garret of a place. A stove stood in the middle upon a slab of stone. Its chimney-pipe went up almost to the blackened ceiling; and, taking a sharp turn, continued on and out through the wall.

It was over this stove-pipe, after we had eaten a stuffed duck and beans, that one of the three painters showed us how to toss pancakes; and he did toss them—from the pan over the pipe, catching them in the pan again as they came down. No mean feat.

To this same studio, on a Saturday night—or Sunday morning, in the early hours before dawn—several of us, after a carousal, carried one of the three, Beaumont, up those narrow, stinking stairs, laid him on his bed, seemingly unconscious, and began undressing him. As his trousers were being pulled off, we heard him murmuring, “T’morrer’s Zunday, t’morrer’s Zunday.” With this we left him and his comrades and made for our own beds.

The next morning, with aching heads, some of us took a look in at Julian’s, where on Sundays students competed in making an equisse or painting of a subject taken from the Bible. Imagine the shock, the surprise, which was ours when we beheld Beaumont painting away at his picture. The subject that day was “Christ Walking on the Sea”. He had almost finished his design. He was bright of eye and entirely recovered, having been violently ill after we had gone. We, badly piqued, with aching heads,—wilting in this heated, stale, paint-smelling atmosphere,—were eager and anxious to get out into the fresh air. Later we sought and found restoration in the park of St. Cloud, deciding that such nights were harmful, foolish and bad.

The truest pleasures were found working in Julian’s or Colossi’s, or in days spent at Fontainebleau, Chantilly, Versailles, St. Cloud or in such places as St. Rémy Chevreuse, where we sketched poplars in the valley or ruminated on the thickness of the walls of an ancient Château.

French rivers flow lazily along between tall poplars. In my later wanderings I have longed to paint the Oise or the valley of the Eure, where a painter of landscape would never cease to find subjects to please his mind. On my homeward journey, via Dieppe and Newhaven, the French landscape was so beautiful that I became restless and sad, gazing at it from a third-class window. Rows of poplars were left behind as the train travelled on to the coast. I have never taken that route again.

How I ended that particular journey by London to far-off Norwich I have entirely forgotten. The French landscape and Normandy poplars in late autumn are all that I remember of it.



This spell at Julian's atelier in the Rue du Dragon was in the autumn of 1903, for in the winter of that year, under the influence of Lucien Simon, I painted a large picture called "Leaving the Fair", which, with others, was not hung in 1904, leaving only "Whitsuntide" to carry on the succession of exhibits.



## WALTER RYE'S DIARY

LOOKING at an enclosure in a letter from a solicitor son of an old acquaintance of my early Norfolk days, I am reminded that there were occasions when I sought the company of artists. The enclosure was part of a diary kept by Walter Rye, an eminent antiquary of Norwich who became Mayor of that city in the reign of King Edward VII. That reminds me that Edward VII paid a visit to Norwich during Walter Rye's mayoralty, and it was the first occasion on which I saw real live postilions on large bay horses in silver-mounted harness, drawing a monarch in a well-sprung, luxuriously appointed carriage or landau.

I had never met this son of an old friend until the other day, when I was invited to dine with the Westminster Society, and it was my good fortune to sit as his neighbour. We talked of his father and his country home at a place called Buxton Lammas; of the jolly parties given there. A week ago he sent me these extracts from the diary of his father:

*Page 158.* Year not stated.

"On the 11th December I saw Munnings, the artist, for the first time. On the 27th we had a regal beanfeast of the Woodpeckers at the Cottage, about twenty five picnicking, with self-cooked oysters, sausages and baked potatoes. They went home by themselves having, as I afterwards heard, an impromptu concert in the waiting room at Buxton Lammas station, in which both Munnings and Miss N. distinguished themselves."

*Page 167.*

"Xmas, fatted swan was eaten at Lammas. The Librarian, Munnings and others—twenty two sitting down."

From this it is clear that the quietude of Mendham did not always hold me. Youth must be served. The company of artists and various friends in Norwich lured me away.

Norwich was becoming my social as well as my business centre, and it so happened that I took and furnished rooms over the offices of a lawyer friend known as Nick Everitt, a character. These offices being in Prince of Wales Road, the far side windows looked out on the cathedral close. From a large north window on the top floor I saw the cathedral and its tall spire against the



*A clipped chestnut horse, Firebrand, ridden by my groom, George Curzon. See page 195.*



*"Doys of Yore." Painted 1906. 30" x 25"  
White pony Augereau in Gravel-pit*



10" × 12"

Two calendar designs for Bullard's Brewery Company. The one on the right earned me a much-needed £10.



30" × 35"

"The picture was called 'Charlotte's Pony', and was hung on the line in the second room at the Academy in 1907." See page 168.

sky, and the old lime-trees, long since gone, which belonged to and were inseparable from the scene. On sunny autumn afternoons this foliage made a dreamland setting for the cavalry band, in colourful uniforms, October sunlight glancing on brass trumpet and trombone, yellow leaves falling, lying on the smooth lawns; people strolling or seated, nursemaids with young children, the band playing a waltz or Gilbert and Sullivan air. This is no nostalgic or imaginary picture. It is a scene I am sure that others will not have forgotten.

Antique furniture was plentiful in Norwich then, and I furnished my rooms by exchanging paintings for settees, tables, chairs, and found myself in quarters I could leave in charge of the lawyer's caretaker below. One of the best dealers in antiques—Mace on the Market Place—was beginning to buy my work, and I curse my foolish ignorance when I think how I returned from one of my explorations in Suffolk and, with other treasures, sold him a priceless eight-day clock in a tall, black-and-gold lacquer case.

The rooms were a new step in my painting life. There were all sorts of people to paint, and life was pleasant. My lawyer friend, Everitt, whose hours were long and who was yet partial to a little pleasure, gave me a talking-to, declaring that I should work at least four hours a day. If only I did that, think of the money I could make! My recollections are that a regard for a falling account at the bank brought me to the country and back to my work, to rides and simpler nights, with reading and chess and the dog.

And now a clear vision of Middleton Hall comes into my thoughts—a fine old Elizabethan farmhouse standing remote down a long drive through gated meadows. It was less than two miles away, and on many a winter evening did I walk over to supper with my friend, David Johnson, who lived there. A good churchman and parishioner, a good friend, I had known him since I was a boy. He used to be my ideal crusader. I imagined him lying on a tomb in Wingfield church, his hands together in prayer, his wife at his side. In his home I drank the best home-brewed and ate the best food ever cooked by woman. Suffolk-cured hams, cold duck or game, home-made cheese, and apple tart and cream was the fare.

"Come and hold the candle, Alfred, while I draw some ale," he would say.

The black, oak cellar door, opening from the hall, led down a flight of shallow steps into the gloom where the candle-light showed casks of home-brewed beer on trestles. Filling a large brown jug which had figures of the chase on it, David led the way

back to the dining-room. His girls were away at school, and I was often the only guest. The three of us seated:

"Now," said he, "what's it to be, ham or bird?"

I might be able to describe a sky or a tree, but never the taste of the hams cured at Middleton Hall, or the blue, stilton-looking cheese, or tart and cream—all was perfection.

This may sound as though I were a glutton, but in these days of insufficient food, rationed out in beggarly pittances, it is pleasant to recall memories of farm butter, cream and cheese, of home-cured hams and bacon and the like. It is pleasant, too, to recall the taste of eggs laid by barn-door hens, and not by wretched victims imprisoned in forcing-houses—or laying batteries, as they are called.

After supper David's wife played the piano while he sang in a tenor voice the songs I still recall, and one in particular—"My Sweetheart, when a Boy".

Yet in my heart the beams remain,  
The years have no alloy,  
When I remember her again,  
My sweetheart, when a boy.

Songs bring back memories which have lain forgotten for years.

The scene is in the large dining-room. A carved, Jacobean mantelpiece and a fire at one end; black beams across the ceiling. A crimson cloth on the table, from which the supper has been cleared, leaving a tray with the brown jug refilled. A picture of a fat ox on one wall, and an old portrait of some farmer-ancestor facing a largish picture of a cock-tailed hunter in a landscape.

I sit in an armchair by the fire. Mrs. Johnson at the piano. David, regaled, mellow, red in the face, cultured, refined, is singing, "Yet in my heart the beams remain". As I write, I grow sad thinking of evenings so happily spent with kind friends. When I left the front door and got to the first gate in the dark, I could define tree-shapes against the sky, and at last see the pale drive ahead of me crossing the meadows. So through the next gate and the next, leading into the lonely lane which took me home, so lonely and dark that the rustling sound of a dead leaf gave me a fright.

Soon after my return from Paris to quiet Mendham, clothed in December's mists, I was again at Middleton Hall, contrasting those cheap St. Germain *déjeuners* of *lapin au* something or other, or *veau* this or that, with a cut from a Suffolk-cured ham, followed by an apple tart and home-made, blue, stilton-looking cheese. The *déjeuners* washed down with sour *vin ordinaire* were forgotten with the taste of October-brewed ale.

Later, when I lived at Swainsthorpe, my friend moved to a farm up a hill, at Denton, between Harleston and Bungay. There were some twenty miles between us, and times were not so good. No wonder I am melancholy when those strains of a song come to my mind as I work: "Yet in my heart the beams remain". David and his wife are both departed. In the tea-room at the Academy not so long ago a nurse came and spoke to me. She was their eldest daughter, Mary, now a woman of thirty or more. We recalled the Christmas parties with songs and music in one room and whist in another, all leading up to a tremendous supper and syllabubs.

Mary said to me: "Do you remember how Father used to sing 'The Midshipmite'?"

"Oh, yes," said I, and suddenly recalled the words:

'Twas in fifty-five, on a winter's night,  
Cheerily, my lads, yo ho!  
We'd got the Rooshian lines in sight  
When up came the bold little midshipmite,  
Cheerily, my lads, yo ho!  
"Who'll come ashore to-night?" said he,  
"And spike those guns along with me?"  
"Why bless you, sir, come along," says we;  
Cheerily, my lads, yo ho!

Songs rushed to mind out of the past, as they do now, in thinking of David and his wife and home. He sang those old songs of Harry Clifton's:

Rome wasn't built in a day, my boys;  
Remember, the world is wide.

Johnson's brother-in-law was George Stebbings, the bank manager of song, who came to gatherings and parties and sang not only "True till Death", but another fizzer, "The Little Drummer"—

Marching, marching, gaily on they go,  
With the dear old colours waving to and fro;  
Eager in the conflict, every heart is brave,  
Marching on to glory, o'er a soldier's grave.

The lines were ended with dramatic flourish and style to clapping of hands and encores.

Before I forget: while I hear its words and tune, let me write a verse of perhaps the oldest song I remember, which went thus:

Just down the lane, over the stile,  
Under the old oak-tree,  
The stars brightly shine,  
The clock striking nine;  
There's somebody waiting for me.

This went to a waltz refrain, and I often sing it now when happy on a horse. It was a song of the 'eighties.

An older memory. Here is Mr. Olley, manager of an ironmonger's shop in the High Street, Harleston. He is all dressed up, and stands on the concert platform, music in hand, as someone plays the leading notes of the accompaniment. We and our parents, the governess and the aunts from Walsham Hill, and others from the Vicarage, sitting in the front row, are listening. Mr. Olley sings his song, the chorus going thus:

For I really can't keep still,  
I really can't keep still,  
'Tis a fact that whether I sit or stand,  
I really can't keep still.

We loved it. Mr. Olley was a comedian, and made us die with laughing. Another Olley success for an encore was a song about Cupid. The chorus ran thus:

For he's bound to come in at the window  
If you don't let him in at the door;  
Or through the skylight, in the dead of the night,  
Or make his way up through the floor.  
By the lightning flash or the water-spout—  
There's no use trying to keep him out;  
For Cupid's a dodger beyond a doubt:  
He's love, love, love.

Such were the songs we used to sing in the days when people cursed Mr. Gladstone and adored Lord Salisbury. At least the people I knew!



## MAKING A LANDSCAPE PICTURE

AS experiences accumulate, the painter of landscape and figures gradually finds ways and means to carry out his purpose. His intentions and desires are more often frustrated than fulfilled. Looking at pictures of this kind, it should not be difficult to tell which were done either on the spot or from studies.

The truest and most satisfying form of landscape and figure-painting has been achieved only through endless trouble taken, apart from the actual technique. Whatever the results, in studio or open-air work, the latter is the more awkward to battle with and master—so difficult that if a young artist were too aware of what is ahead he might never dare begin. A combination of youthful vanity and ignorance leads on to defeat and disaster or success. I use the word “success” only in this respect: that fought-out struggles, resulting in the gain of design, tone, colour, light, values, drawing and perspective, should be allowed the flattery of that word, if only in small measure.

In making pictures inspired by something seen, many artists of the past encountered and overcame disheartening obstacles. Their struggles are unknown to us as we glance at this picture or that. We may get a glimmering of resolution and perseverance underlying style or technique if we stay long enough and begin wondering how it was done. So long as the visual arts continue, one generation must learn from the last.

In my early days, a generation of artists in Europe, carrying on from the last, were doing work which was shown with pride in art galleries. These pictures needed no lecturer to explain their merits. Noble efforts by the artists of a nation, once shown so well, are now discarded as “old-fashioned” and replaced by a form of art that flourishes only through clever propaganda. But the attraction is only momentary. Like a poor story, they do not tempt a public twice.

If, deeply desiring to look once again into a favourite book, we should find it gone from the shelf and replaced by one we could neither read nor understand, how bitter would be our disappointment! In galleries here and abroad we may arrive to-day in exultant anticipation, but what a setback is ours! Our senses,

alert to the pleasures to come, receive a blow beyond description. Seeking a vanished picture leaves me in blank despair. Good paintings kept their places in the days I write of, and were there to look at again. If some gave way to fresh additions, these latter were first-class. The younger artist, influenced by a variety of the very best work, was inspired to carry on. It is natural to emulate and compete.

Eager to begin, to enter the fray again after thinking a lot in front of fine pictures, I determined to do that which lay nearest. This is why I sought out the Grays and others who were not regularly employed, who were their own masters and who were glad of the money I paid them as models. Once in a groove of work, one thing led to another, and fresh motifs (as they called them in Paris) grew. A wealth of subjects, vain ambitions, will conquer slothfulness and force an artist up in the morning. Without imposing any severity on himself, he strives, and so learns to see with a new eye. This stage of seeing, when reached, is like a dawn which, growing, shows us more and still more.

During those years, Mendham village, its corners, by-lanes and meadows were my painting-grounds. In or out of sight of a road or footpath, a canvas and easel, with models posing as I worked, became an everyday occurrence. A passer-by said "Good morning", but no more thought of staying to take a look than he would at a man cutting a fence. The Red Lion meadow was my workshop for two whole summers. Gray's caravans, shooting-galleries and swing-boats stood there.

There are places where I can work and places where I cannot work. This Red Lion meadow had a true bohemian air. Quarts of beer or shandy-gaff in a jug were brought out. Gray smoked his clay pipe, and all went well. Here was the first try-out of a skewbald pony in a picture.

These memories were started quite suddenly when out riding, 20th June, 1947, as I stayed my horse in a grass lane by a gate. I was trying hard to recollect things when the sight of a distant field of poppies brought back a forgotten ride to Bungay and another field of poppies.

There was in that town of Bungay a dealer in antiques named Watts. He owned a small succession of shops where he stored and sold anything from antiques to bedding, old iron and earthenware. In a small end room he cut hair. On this occasion he cut my hair, and I bought the walnut bureau with William Palleday's name in the middle small drawer.

He delivered the bureau. The little horse he drove was a skewbald. When passing the Red Lion, he saw me at work, left his

cart and came into the meadow. Being as good a dealer in horses as he was a cutter of hair, he was soon offering me the skewbald. My indulgence in Red Lion beer, his chatty talk and beady eyes were, no doubt, the cause of the deal which I made with him. The sun shone. We all drank draught ale. The landlady had one. The daughter had one. Charlotte came back from washing in the backyard of the Lion and joined in. Watts wanted ten pounds for the horse. In a weak moment I offered him ten pounds for the horse and the bureau, and he took it.

Fred Gray went and fetched the horse next day, bearing a cheque I could ill afford, but as soon as I saw it out in a field with Gray's ponies I knew it would bring me luck.

That little horse was an inspiration to me, if ever I had one. He became a new light in my life, a tyrant I could not resist. A common sight at a horse fair was a row of ponies standing head towards a fence. "Ponies at a Fair", hung on the line at the Academy, 1906, was the picture I began with when I bought the skewbald. He was the foreground horse at the end of the row. The fence was the one between the Lion meadow and the churchyard. The draughts of shandy-gaff were the true painters' potion in those sunny, far-off days of July. Ponies dozing, stamping, dozing. Fred Gray being painted as he lay on the grass by the fence, and father Gray brushing away flies with sprigs of elder. The father smoking his clay, the son his cigarette, myself painting away in blissful assurance as the shandy-gaff flowed and green lights reflected under the white belly of the Bungay skewbald.

Seeing the field of poppies to-day brought back the Flixton road, on the way to Bungay. Then came Watts, the pony and the rest.

By then I was finding it saved time to work from my own models. I had bought a small chestnut pony with a light mane and tail. It came from Drake, one of many horse-copers using the Fox and Goose Inn in Ber Street, a resort of the trotting fraternity in Norwich. He became my procurer of models.

"Hey, Mr. Munnings, I got yew a nice sort to paint," became a familiar greeting at Spelman's sale-ground on a Saturday.

"Let's have a look," I would say.

"They're down by the Bell"—and one of the droves near the Castle terrace, where the road passes by the Bell Hotel, would be pointed out, and soon I would see the proposed model.

Such a plan suited me, for I changed a pony for another, after giving it a pleasant life for two months or longer, Drake always

drawing more money. I dealt with him for another skewbald, a warrior of a pony; a rich dark brown-and-white creation, and the most villainous. He frightened us all one day, screaming with rage, spraying urine and kicking. He broke the shafts of a cart in ten seconds.

"Now," says Gray, "did anyone ever see such a s-d?"

"Well," said Charlotte, "he's dangerous."

But what a model! Sleek and handsome. Perhaps too sleek to be picturesque. I used him a lot, and often rode him at a canter through every parish in the neighbourhood. He condescended to carry a man, but absolutely refused to pull a cart.

It is pleasant to remember one picture which gave me no unhappy moments. It was of Charlotte leading the chestnut pony along that well-used, well-clipped fence. The blue blouse and white apron on her tall, stout figure made the picture. With silver earrings and black silk neckerchief she looked a swell.

"Lord, Charlotte!" I cried, "what a grand woman you are!"

"Don't tell th' owd fule that," said Gray.

She wore no hat to shade her brown face and shiny black hair drawn tightly back in a small bun showing the shape of her head. The picture was called "Charlotte's Pony", and was hung on the line in the second room at the Academy in 1907.



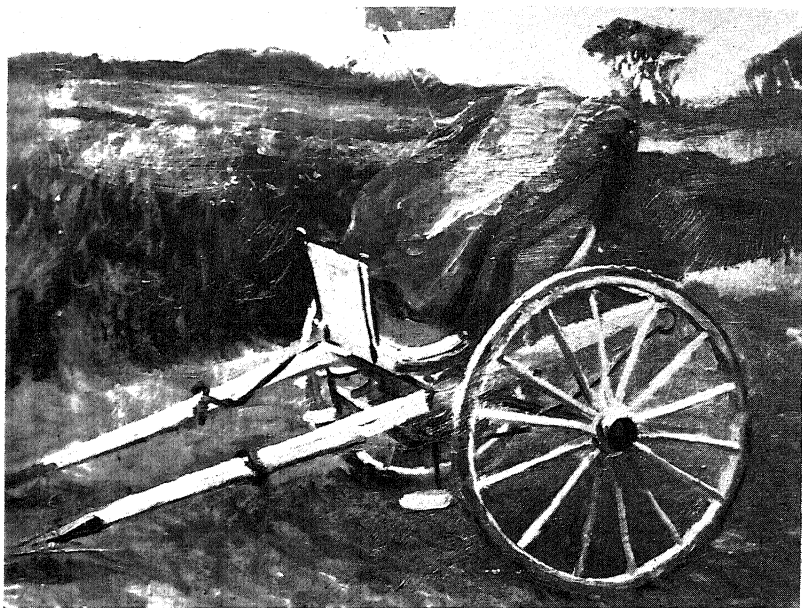


Left: *Another drawing for the Waverley Cycles competition inspired by Marie Corelli's "Sorrows of Satan".*

Right: *"In the evening he dressed himself like 'The Spider' in 'The Winter King'."*  
*See page 188.*



*A bright yellow advertisement for Colman's Mustard which was never used. Still in possession of the author.*



*"A comfortable old yellow-wheeled dealer's gig." See page 199.*



30" x 28"

*"Seeing this forgotten picture of a lad with ponies in a grassy lane, the long-buried past was flashed back as clearly as though it were only yesterday." See page 206.*



30" × 24"  
*Shrimp riding the dun-coloured horse on Ringland Hills.*



30" × 24"  
*The yard at the Bush Inn. Shrimp on grey mare, Drake and others in background.*





*"For £20 I bought a beautiful old white Welsh mare with a long, curly mane and Arab-looking countenance."  
 Painting of Shrimp riding along the ridge of Ringland Hills. See page 213.*



*"The Coming Storm." 72" x 50"  
 In Sydney Art Gallery. See page 218.*



## PAINTING ON A SUNDAY

SUNDAY morning, July 4th, 1948. Ardleigh church bells are sounding over the hill. Their peals stir the memory on summer evenings, and coming and going on the wind:

Swell out and fail, as if a door  
Were closed between me and the sound.

They brought back the Sunday when I was painting a grey cart-mare, and my father, passing on his way to church, declared I should never prosper if I painted on a Sunday. The sounds of bells then came from Redenhall church. The tower with its four pinnacles showed over the hill beyond the river, which he crossed in a kind of ferry-boat working on a chain from bank to bank.

I see my father's receding figure and grey top hat growing smaller across the far pastures, and recall my queer feelings of doubt, a sort of chilly fear which went down my spine as I asked myself the question whether I should stop work and prosper, or get on with it and risk the consequences.

Who can turn back on a journey started? I went on until the fellow holding the mare had to go to dinner, and just as my parent came home late. It was Sacrament Sunday.

Sacrament Sunday are two words that fill me with awe. Often, instead of letting us go, we had to sit in the pew and watch this strange ceremony going on in the chancel, seeing my father walk solemnly up the aisle, and seeing William Riches, the other churchwarden, in his light, tight check Sunday trousers and black coat, tiptoeing with his bonneted wife back to their pew, his eyes fixed on the ground, his head bowed, the rest all doing the same. What it all meant we did not know.

I felt a villain when my work was over on that Sunday, although I had resisted my fluctuating conscience by murmuring to myself, "Persevere, persevere. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might'."

But why I really felt a villain was because I had begged and persuaded my father to buy this fine grey mare so that I could have her to paint, and there was I having her held on a Sunday and painting her in spite of his noble deed. His deed was more than noble, for he was against grey horses. The carters disliked

them because they showed a dirt stain, hard to wash out, on their quarters from lying in the stable.

My position was a doubtful one, but a sense of duty urged me to continue. Was I not seizing an opportunity? The mare and the man holding her would both be at work all the week. Here they were at home, and it was a fine day, and the sun shining. I had started, and when started you should never turn back. Of course I wondered—even then, at the age of twenty-three or twenty-four—what the Almighty would do about it and whether I should be allowed to prosper.

How long ago it all seems! I remember accompanying my father in the drive to the farm when he went to buy the mare, he asking me whether she would make a good picture. I can't believe that any son had a kinder father. He was anything but a "wealthy miller", continually being hit by bad debts and cutting of prices by the large mills in towns like Ipswich or Norwich.

The mare replaced another grey which worked trace in a waggon-team of three, and which was handed over to the glebe, then farmed separately by my mother, who ran a red-polled herd. This mare had black legs and dappled quarters, and was the first grey I ever tried to paint. She appeared in water-colours in the Royal Institute of Painters again and again.

In the end there must have been something in what my sad parent prophesied, because that particular picture, with the new grey mare in it, was not hung in the Academy. Although I thought it my number one, it was not. A judgment!

I feel like reflecting on grey horses yet awhile. Looking at photographs of the Preston picture, "The Last of the Fair", my mind records that the old white pony with forelock and mane was none other than the grey belonging to my landlord, Mr. Alfred Wharton, who farmed Shearing's Farm, and who rented the half of the house to me at ten pounds a year. He it was who followed my grandmother as tenant of Walsham Hall Farm. He was one more of the many kind friends I seem to have made use of, for I was always painting that white pony. No telephone existed then. I either rode up and saw Alfred Wharton, or sent Fred Gray on a bicycle if I wanted it.

Another beautiful grey was the property of Ben Cook. The buttercup picture was not the only painting of her, and she was first-rate as a picture horse. No artist ever dreamed of a better. She came from the London General Omnibus Company and had worked on the all-white-horse route between Liverpool Street and Putney.

Mention of those buses recalls my first quaking visit to the Academy. How safe was I on the top of one of these and assured

of getting to Piccadilly? What good sort of men those bus-drivers were! None would have spoken as the stage-coachmen did to George: "Don't you think because you ride on my mail I'm going to talk to you about 'orses."

What crowded traffic blocks! Did they ever exist? Were all those hooves once pounding up and down the Strand?

All have passed, like a dream. The greys of the Putney Buses No. 14 were the same type, bred in Ireland for the purpose. The right thing is always forthcoming when there is a demand for it. The grey boulannaise stallions, three abreast in the huge Paris omnibuses, astonished me, but our pairs of grey geldings, or mares, drawing smaller vehicles, were more workman-like.

I have often wondered what sort of grey it was that Jack Spraggon rode in the great run with the Flathat Hunt in *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*.

"Sing out, Jack! for heaven's sake, sing out!" exclaimed Lord Scamperdale . . . always as eager for a run as if he'd never seen one. "*Hold hard, gentlemen,*" roared Jack, *clapping spur into his grey, or rather his lordship's grey, dashing in front and drawing the horse across the road to stop the progression of the field.* Then, hounds having got away and Lord Scamperdale and his huntsman, Frostyface, well on the line, Spraggon also turns his horse and gallops off, exclaiming: "*Now, ye tinkers, we'll all start fair.*"

May my pen not carry me too exuberantly into these scenes, so well portrayed by the great Surtees.

Ben Cook's grey mare and those other grey models were superseded by another purchase—a white pony, who became part of my existence some years later, finally pulling my mother about in her small four-wheeled open pony-carriage. When staying at home, I have driven with her at two and a half miles an hour, the reins carried over a high, steel, fork-like affair in front, the pony's tail and quarters well above the eyeline, as we sat in the low vehicle and crawled along.

This pace suited the dogs, one of them being Friday. During my absence in Paris he had made himself at home at the mills, and found that these leisurely journeys in company with other dogs just suited his taste. There was much more time for hunting every hedge, ditch and field, and however far the four-wheeled tortoise had gone ahead, it was child's play to regain the place in front held by the dogs, which, for some unknown and inconceivable reason, periodically affected a manner of running on three legs, carrying a hind one awhile.

I called that particular pony Augereau. But more of him anon

## I ENLARGE MY STUDIO

WHEN a young man becomes his own master and has his freedom, he may go to perdition. Thinking of the glorious uncertainty of an artist's career, it seems a miracle that I kept my head above water and scrambled through.

For six years from the age of twenty I was seldom without a horse to ride. I paid my rent and a man's wages. I paid models and bought them drink. I kept up a life-insurance premium, which my father had made me start in my teens, to draw a thousand pounds at the age of fifty—which I did. Being free was perilous. When cheques came rolling in, I was off on the loose. A shrinking account at the bank frightened me back to work—proving that poverty is best for youth. Often did my father say, "Save your money". I never did.

As a book of recollections, this has started all wrong. I should have drawn up three lists, thus: vivid memories, distinct memories, foggy memories. Perhaps a dozen might have come under the first heading. One, for certain, would have been the memory of an old, grey-bearded gentleman with a kind manner—a Mr. Fisher of Fressingfield, who called on me about income tax, which was then sixpence in the pound. I see every line of his face, his overcoat, his horse and trap tied in the road outside the studio. I kept no accounts. The thought of them stuns my brain now as it did then. Those vile papers, which arrive at a time of the year when people's hearts expand, are a curse in the life of a man; they kill all good feeling and incentive to greater effort, handicapping him like a horse in a race.

I was not handicapped then. Awkward situations came and went. Safety was in work and sales. In my early twenties I was elected a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours. Each year my full number of works were sent up and sold. The mere mention of water-colours reminds me how exasperating it was to change from canvas and oils to the other medium. However, when once under the spell of water-colour painting, it held me. But why do we paint at all?

My father's words, "Save your money", must have had effect at that time, for I was able to enlarge the studio. To-day no such thrill can happen. Hampered by heavy rates and taxes,

by abnormal costs of building and foolish forms to fill in, I can make no additions, nor build myself the ideal studio that I have striven and longed for. In my early twenties, though poor, besides being allowed to live, I could launch out and improve my workshop; and I did.

Somewhere about 1904 I took in the saw-pit end of the carpenter's shop, adding it to the studio. Only a wooden wall dividing the pit from the rest of the place was taken down, another skylight added, and a two-inch-thick floor laid over the saw-pit.

Gerald Stones, my friend from Julian's, was staying with me at the time this took place. Being a droll fellow, with a precious sense of humour, he joined with me in sheer delight at seeing this forty-five feet of studio floor accomplished. We had asked a friend or two, and Gray and his son, and Norman, who came to cook sausages. We played the Broadwood, now a mere speck in a vast space, we marched up and down from end to end, the mere watching us with ears pricked.

The door opened, and old Norman (who all the time, as manager of the premises, had seen the place grow) appeared and gazed up at the new light and length of floor.

"Mercy! what a grand place!" said he, putting his nose in a pewter tankard.

We kept up the march to the farther end and yet back again.

"Come on, Gray; come on, Norman," said we, and we all marched and sang.

Alas! poor Stones. He became my landscape painting partner later on, and was then often at Mendham. His means were meagre. In the end he went to Australia. The war came, and he was killed in Gallipoli. His letters, full of fun and nonsense, written from a farm at Needham Market in Suffolk, lie here, with other early mementoes, upon this table as I write. His ghost may be here, too. Who knows?

Soon after the lengthening of the studio Stones and I were joined by three other men from Julian's atelier: Beaumont, whom we found painting on the Sunday after a punch night in the Café du Dragon; Captain Warden, who wouldn't go to the Bal Bullier, and Phelan, who had been robbed by his studio partner.

With the exception of "the Cap" (as we called Warden), they appeared strange in a far-off Suffolk village in those unenlightened days. Phelan and Beaumont wore wide black hats like anarchists. These two were boarded by Mrs. Corbyn under my roof, for fifteen shillings a week each. Warden lodged up the hill a

hundred yards off. We had eggs and bacon—not one rasher but several—for breakfast every morning. A roast loin of pork with crackling was no luxury then; neither were strings of brown sausages and mash, or legs of mutton or sirloins of beef. Mrs. Corbyn and her daughter made play of the task of catering. Our capacity to enjoy good food was never for a moment discouraged. We performed great feats of walking, of painting and even of beer-drinking at distant inns—not at the Lion, because of the look of it: it was too near home. These fellows had a strange appearance. They were received with all due honour and respect when we went to the mills, and they thought my father a great swell, and listened to all he had to say.

Sketching-bags and traps and canvas carriers from Paris, wooden paint-boxes with leather shoulder-straps for which I finally discarded my old black, japanned boxes, the French brushes, our food parcels, French cigarettes—these were soon becoming every-day objects. A happy, carefree band, we stalked the valley for motifs, as they called them, returning for high tea at six; and, later, often tried out an evening motif. One night a week would find us at an inn called The Cross at Withersdale. A sweet name! There we held uninterrupted intercourse on art, to the mystification of the rustics. But they understood when we stood them beer.

Beaumont had come straight from Venice, bringing with him the vilest paintings done in blue, yellow and red. He inflicted these on me, or rather I inflicted them on myself at ten shillings each and his keep for a month. Later, when a Norwich dealer came to buy anything I had to sell, these were thrown in. Long afterwards a man turned up with two to sign, he having bought them as mine. One still remains with me as a memento of days too idyllic to recall. Gay gleamings in a world of shadow.

Smells of roast pork drift across the years between. Lanes at night, with overgrown hedges and growth of wild roses, our feet stirring the white dust and our voices disturbing the silence. A sedge-grown bank of a river; the poplars' sound; willows whitening in the breeze rippling the river where swallows skim the surface. Along the bank, not far off, sits one figure with his Paris easel; yet farther on, another; and just over a bridge, where cattle are standing, two more blithe spirits sing and paint away. A distant church clock strikes unregarded. Coots may come and coots may go, but we went on forever.

Our brief spell ended in dispersal—Warden to his father's grange at Moreton-in-the-Marsh. He was a swell, and wherever he went always kept in his room a photograph of his father,

wearing a cut-away coat and white breeches and tops, and a silk hat, on a good sort of hunter. This proved him a swell to us.

Beaumont disappeared to Lancaster, en route for the States and more scene-painting with Phelan; Stones to his sister, a doctor's wife in Derbyshire, to come and settle later on in Needham Market, Suffolk, until 1913. Such visits, coming to a close, left one lonely, silent and sad.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE BLACK FOREST

**A**GOUTY, well-to-do artist, already in these pages, honoured me with himself, his varalettes, his stick and his whisky-bottle now and then. Savile Flint was his name, and he might have walked out of a play in the part of a Victorian bachelor artist of quality and tone. A spreading, frizzy, ginger moustache and watery blue eye, pince-nez on a black string, a homespun Norfolk jacket and baggy knickerbockers, brown worsted stockings, white spats over brown boots—these were his make-up, and he cost me more than the fifteen-shillings-a-week bohemian commoners. I gave Mrs. Corbyn eighteen shillings a week, and she always treated Savile Flint, Esq., with due respect and attention. He painted scenes in water-colour and knew every trick of the trade. His sketching-stool was old, well-tested and strong, his box and materials, his stretched Whatman paper were all in order; and so was the syphon of soda and the whisky bottle.

Whether it was my friend Savile Flint or the family doctor who talked me into spending a month in the Black Forest, I cannot remember. But, my pictures having gone to the Academy, once again I forsook the peaceful paths of Mendham and my dog companion for that pine-forest and valley district in Bavaria, or wherever it may be. Waiting for a brother brush who never came, I stayed at the Hotel Poste in Hornburg, each night paying for and sharing a bottle of hock with the landlady's son, who always chose the vintage and drank the largest half. I walked the valleys, painted streams and goats, blossoming orchards, white against the pine-forests above. Wherever I sat to work, awkward, snarling farm-dogs frightened and froze the inspiration out of my soul. How I cursed those dogs! The little cows at work in plough and waggon on a hillside and others pulling small loads of manure were all fresh sights to me.

Of all the Easters of the past, not one did I ever see to compare with this at Offenburg, where ox-waggons dressed in evergreen and filled with families in national dress poured into the crowded town. Alsatian girls with stiff ribbon bow head-dress and embroidered scarves and aprons; thick-set young men in short,





*"The White Hart at Scole, the finest coaching inn left in England." See page 229.*



28" × 28"

*"Poplars I loved, for I often sat at work painting the tracery of those trees against the sky." See page 230.*



60'' × 40''

*"I began a large, evening picture there, the sun setting almost opposite."* See page 239.



30'' × 30''

*"My favourite picture, 'A Summer Afternoon', was painted there."* See page 238.

scarlet-lined black coatees and white trousers. Other girls wore white hats with red woollen balls round the brim, and they all danced in great cafés to waltzes. Magnificent, strong and sturdy sons and daughters of the soil. Where are those gay spirits now?

I ventured afield, and travelled to Cologne and Strasbourg, and was awed by strutting officers wearing brilliant uniforms. I never felt so humble as when I stayed in what I thought was a very smart hotel in Strasbourg. Such rooms, such food, and so clean! It was a cut above my appearance—but it was only for a night.

Nevertheless, my return to the country studio had to be contemplated, and with money going fast, I reached Shearings Farm a travelled man. The mind does not at once recover its content, and the brain is not ready to strive, after such jaunts as I had taken; but I found the groove I had left behind, and with a fresh eye was seeing pictures everywhere around me.

Excitement at the growth of the studio dying down, I found it a good workshop. The sound of the blacksmith's anvil, a passing waggon, the sparrows bustling and building in the thatch, were pleasant company, and another dog, called Joe, was there. In my absence in Paris, Friday had taken to the Mill House and my mother's four-wheeler.

Little Joe, who succeeded Friday, was a small, wise, Welsh terrier—a sprite of a dog. He became my companion for years. I found him one day on a ride to Bungay; my favourite ride by bridle-ways and lanes past Flixton Hall and Park, where thousands of rabbits ran across to woods on the near side of the road as I galloped along. Joe was a card and no doubt. I saw him pulling a cat about by the scruff of its neck. The cat liked it. He was only a year old, but I knew at once what a character he was, and bought him there and then.

Fred Gray went next day with a cart and brought him home. From then on Joe came right into the story. He accompanied me on every walk or ride. He often ran with one hind leg in the air. He killed rats in hundreds and dived to bottoms of streams for a stone or even a brick. He crawled up gates and ladders to get a ball. In the evenings, in my room, he lay in the easy-chair opposite, and when I went up to bed, he went too, and kept the ghost away at the end of the landing. For there was a ghost in that old house.

## CHAPTER XL

### EDWARD ADCOCK: EARLY PATRON AND FRIEND

IT would take a volume rather than a chapter to describe in detail small commissions received in my youth. One must suffice. It came from Boswells. Here's a picture of Boswells as it was then. Large plate-glass windows. The door in the centre with the name Boswell above, in gold letters. It is the most distinguished-looking shop in London Street; and no wonder, seeing there's a Crome landscape in the left window and a Romney lady on the right. How bright and clean the plate glass! I walk in.

"Is Mr. Jim about?"

"Yes," says Henry the shopman.

Along comes Mr. Jim Boswell, a stout, jolly soul with a large, bald head and bright eyes.

"Ha!" says he, "the very man. You got my letter? Now I want you to paint some cattle for a customer. You're to stay there and do the picture. I'll give you ten pounds. Only about a twenty-five-inch canvas. Is that settled?"

"Yes. When do I go?"

"Soon as you can," says Jim. "You've to do this at Breckles Hall [I think it was]—for Prince Frederick Duleep Singh."

I had never stayed with a nobleman or a prince—or with the county, either. At the time I was about twenty-three.

Testing my memory, I see the dog-cart and man at the station; I see Prince Frederick at the Hall—rather short, stoutish, going bald; dark, melancholy eyes; a dreamer and an antiquary. After dinner he played and sang, in a good baritone. One song I've never forgotten, by Goring Thomas, "A Summer Night".

"I don't think I did that too well," said the Prince.

Again, with feeling, he was singing, "Don't you remember?" etc.

The bull and cows that I painted were the last of an ancient breed of Suffolk dun-coloured, polled cattle. I stayed in that beautiful house, filled with pictures and treasures, for nearly a week painting the picture. Soon after this he wrote to say he was coming to Harleston to inspect a squadron of Suffolk Hussars, and might he call at my studio in Mendham? He came, and

even went into my rooms in the farm. I was quite thrilled at such a visit. He was interested in some old pewter. Whenever I see a certain piece standing here, I recall how he looked at the maker's mark on it.

"It is by John Fasson," said the Prince.

Before getting into the tall dog-cart from the Magpie Hotel, Harleston, he told me again how delighted he was with the cattle-picture.

"Would you mind if I asked you how much you were paid for doing it?"

"Ten pounds," I replied.

"Dear me!" said he sadly. "Well——" and then left.

A charming letter came later from him enclosing five pounds. Would I accept this small amount? he felt that the payment I had received was inadequate. I was well-satisfied at the time, and it was the sum I had agreed to accept.

Among the outside distractions that broke into my routine, none was more welcome than the visits of Edward Adcock, an old Norwich friend. He was one who indulged in a good, full way of living. Food, wine, furniture, pictures, were all to his liking. Often did I stay with this jolly patron and his wife in their nice house on the Newmarket Road—perhaps too often. He was one of the first in Norwich to own a Silent Night Minerva, a glorious car which sent up columns of dust. Driving it himself, nobody knew where we went or what we did. Stopping at this inn or that, looking at churches, seeking antiques. He would send me a wire, and arrive with a honk of his horn outside the studio gate, a great basket of food and champagne in the car, and a cheque-book in his pocket.

Sometimes I went back with him to his well-run house and good wife. We played bowls on the lawn. Pianola parties and sprees piled up as he increased his fortune. A more generous yet more business-like soul I never met; he was part of the core of provincial England.

Like the alderman of Preston, he drove a hard bargain. Sitting in a chair in my studio as I placed each painting before him in turn, he treated the pictures he liked with derision, and finally bought them for very little. Who knows? They may have been dear, even at a low figure. But they were at least sincere efforts.

"Well, Alfred," said my friend Edward, "what about that one with the funny sky and the caravans? Who's the bloke with the horse? If you don't value it I'd give you ten quid for it."

"Edward, my dear fellow! I can't take that."

"Well, Alfred, what about these two and that? Now," as he placed them together, "I'll give you eighty pounds for these six."

Heavens! what a lot of money! what opportunities! what fortunes!

"Make it a hundred."

"No, I'll tell you what I'll do," as he filled my glass, "I'll give you ninety pounds."

"Well," said I, "let me think."

In the end it was settled; but later the price was forced up by the brothers Boswell. Jim Boswell, with his fat, generous stomach, and busy countenance, and bright brown eye, said one day:

"Munnings, why don't you paint horses pulling a great tree-trunk on a timber-gill? If you do, I'll buy it! Look," he added, "here's the very frame!"—showing me a magnificent, old, gilded swept frame—"a fifty-forty! The very size. I'll have a canvas made for it."

I did paint the picture of a timber-gill drawn by a team of horses. The elms in the background, "with autumn laying here and there a fiery finger on the leaves", stood not far away from the farmhouse in which I lived. I see myself arriving at the spot with a new wooden box as used by my Paris friends. The October sun was at the right angle, and there I made a thirty-by-twenty-five upright study of those autumn trees. A chestnut cart-horse of my father's posed as leader of the team, with another and the grey in the shafts. I cycled up to Metfield, where a carpenter had a timber-gill. I found and treated him and, returning jovial with beer, free-wheeled down the hill, bumped over a row of mud-scrappings and sat in the brook at the bottom. The next day I was back in his yard making a painting of his timber-gill. The result of all this was a fifty-by-forty upright in the grand manner, with Norman in his smock walking at the head of the team. The fine, old, gilded, swept frame from Boswells made it. The masterpiece framed and placed on an easel in my studio, I wrote and told my friend and the Boswells it was on view.

A lunch-party at Harleston Swan was followed by a show of the picture, and a disagreement. My patron, Edward, wanted it, and offered me more money.

"It isn't playing the game," said Jim Boswell.

In the end I kept it, and sold them other works. Eighty pounds was a big sum; these buyers hesitated, and no wonder.

How long after I do not recall, but during my years at Swains-

thorpe, a builder of means, who lived somewhere on Unthank Road—not far from the imposing new Roman Catholic cathedral just then finished—settled to give me eighty-five pounds for that picture. It was sent for and hung, and I walked up one evening at the invitation of the builder (who was a Methodist and abstainer, which shows his judgment must have been sober and sound), and there on his plush-covered table he counted and paid me eighty-five golden sovereigns and put them in a bag and gave them to me. By the time I arrived at my rooms in Prince of Wales Road the weight of gold in my pocket began to tell. With what satisfaction did I place the bag on the counter of Barclays next morning!

That is the story of the timber-gill picture, when one hundred pounds was a great amount of money and went a very long way, bringing with it security and a slight independence.

Patrons increased. I made more use of the rooms I had taken in Prince of Wales Road, and sold work, and held convivial evenings there, too. Then came further changes, another trip to Germany, and a short period in Paris.

I do not avoid the confession—and let it be short—of how, before leaving, I rode the little bay mare up to Norwich to be sold at Spelman's Sale. Looking back, I try to soothe my conscience by thinking her life after that was more to her liking, standing in a hunt stable and carrying the whip of the Suffolk Hounds. Horses are gregarious, and like to hear others moving and eating in the next box or stall. Still more do they love a hunt. But for all that, I should never have sold her. I am making up for this now in keeping my old friends who have kept me. I have sold only four horses in my life, and she was one of them!

The trip across Germany with Shaw Tomkins took us to Amsterdam, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Nuremburg, Coburg, Lichtenfels and Frankfort this time.

We spent days in the Pinakotheks, old and new. We saw more Tintoretto than it seemed possible for any one master to have painted. In Dresden there were large new paintings which literally took my breath away. Where can they be now? At a contemporary exhibition in Munich we saw such masterly performances in paint, such vividly seen subjects of peasant life—one of a bull in particular—that I gave up all hopes of ever being anybody at all.

There were open-air schools of painting in Europe then, and all were on the true path. The old Norwich School and the

Art Circle faded away into insignificance as I stood gaping in front of a huge canvas of a girl walking towards me through luminous greenery which looked as though it were done in a single painting. Another was of some Baltic fishermen in the late evening light—the men coming ashore in their boat on the crest of a wave, all life-size. The wave in the near corner must have been painted with a brush six inches wide. I still have a small coloured reproduction of this framed at my bedside. It had gone one—and even two—beyond anything of our Newlyn School.

I journeyed through Switzerland, once more to land in Paris; and from the sleeper that morning I got into a fiacre with my bag and arrived, to the surprise of my friends, in the courtyard of their new studio high up in the Rue de Seine. It was cleaner than the last foul spot they inhabited!

Comparatively wealthy, with a safe banking account, I had purchased a beautiful pair of ducks and other things on the way from the station. My welcome was such that we all dashed out to a bois-and-charbon shop opposite the courtyard, and not only drank either absinthe or some strong aperitif, but bore bottles of wine up that stone stair, chanting an air we used to sing at Julian's.

After a real blow-out we subsided on beds or chairs in bloated ease and smoked, while I held forth on the pictures I had seen in Dresden and Munich. On the morrow, once more in front of "La Procession" by Lucien Simon and work by Bastien Lepage, Gaston la Touche, Fantin Latour, Lhermitte and other masters of that period, I lost myself in profound contentment and admiration. What are pictures for? To fill a man's soul with admiration and sheer joy, not to bewilder and daze him. I worked again for a few weeks at Julian's—what an atelier that was!—and saw pictures and yet more pictures in the galleries.

Never-fading memories like these I carried back to Mendham, and sat many a long evening reading alone, with Joe in the other easy-chair, until at last Mrs. Corbyn came in with the candlestick and said good night.



## CHAPTER XLI

### BULLARD BROTHERS

**M**Y last chapter is all leading up to my disloyal flight from Shearing's Farm and the low-ceilinged room—the dearly-loved studio and fried-sausage evenings. I reluctantly tell of further restless inclinations which, growing, led me away from the peace of Mendham.

Among my many Norwich acquaintances was one Richard Bullard, a dealer in horses, and a character. He and I were the same age. His wife, Bessy, had the money; she was the daughter of a farmer of means. Financed in this way, he made his career with the help of a certain captain. The captain found the customers and Bullard the horses.

The captain dressed in true horsey style to the last word. Often I beheld him with respect and awe as he rode through London Street, Norwich, in a bowler hat with narrow brim and a ring at the back for a hat-guard, and a suit of grey cord, with his trousers strapped under his heels. He had a long chin and full colour, and looked very innocent.

Now, in those days Bullard plied a modest trade in stables at Old Catton, just outside the city, and it was there that I paid him thirty-five guineas for a dark-brown six-year-old mare, fifteen hands three inches high and with a cock tail.

To relate the story of my purchase I must go back to a fine September morning.

I was sitting in the sun outside the White Horse at Crostwick—which comes into my picture later—planning my day, when two men in a gig, of the sort driven by horse-dealers of the higher class, drawn by a horse to match, pulled in from the road up to the door of the inn. I knew them to be a pair of brothers of the name of Bullard, whose father was widely known in the profession.

Dick, one of the brothers, said " 'Morning ", and we were soon acquainted. After refreshments they went on to a sale and I to my day's work. Some weeks later I called on Dick Bullard to see his horses. He lived in a small house adjoining a small stable-yard. Horses were lodged in every corner, and it was plain to see that Bullard was no millionaire. His wife was a good soul, and had possessions through which the stable gained help in the

course of a long struggle. It was here, eventually, that I bought the mare. Thirty-five guineas was a large sum to me. However, after much hesitation and calling again to ride the animal and obtaining a veterinary's certificate, I finally paid the sum, and the mare was mine. A more willing or sounder creature never lived.

I wonder I never rode the animal off her legs. There were days when I lived on her back. After a spell of work on my part, I would suddenly feel that my labours deserved a day off. Before getting out of bed I had planned in my mind where to go, and, accompanied by Joe, I would take a day out, with a halt to feed—for inns had corn and stabling then. However, instead of being worked to death, the mare improved out of all knowledge in looks; and no wonder, for her former history had been one of work. Bullard had been jobbing his surplus horses to a Cromer livery stable for work in four-horse brakes throughout the summer months.

To-day we hate the fashion of a short dock and a hog mane. We then foolishly thought it gave a smart appearance to a horse. My new purchase had been given these finishing touches to Nature's design. The right appearance for a horse in the hunting-field has been shown in the old sporting prints of the days of Alken and Osbaldeston—a mane and forelock, and natural, full "banged" tail, as it was called.

The brown mare comes into later chapters. I am only telling readers how and when I bought her. I end by stating that she was never lame and always wanted to go. Good-natured to the last degree, she served as hack, hunter and model. When the Gowings, father and son, colt-breakers, came from Harleston and clipped my new possession (they used a hand-clipper in those days), Charles, the son, declared her a "good 'un", and she looked the part, living on good hay and crushed oats and bran from my father's mill. Hay was then, I believe, three pounds a ton, and oats six shillings a sack.

During the last winter at Mendham I cautiously began to appear at meets of Lord Stradbroke's Harriers. These hunted the most rural arable district in East Anglia: heavy land, deep ditches, thick fences, small farms and small fields. If a hare ran on a good scenting day, we were jumping all the time.

It was a farmers' hunt, and the meets were at inns in out-of-the-way parishes between Harleston, Bungay and Halesworth—at Laxfield Wolf, Rumburgh Buck, Fressingfield Fox and Goose, Gratfield Bell, St. Peter's Hawk and many others. The farmers, though not wealthy, were a jovial lot when out for a day, and I

learned a lot in the country of the Saints. There were St. Andrews, St. Johns, St. Cross, St. Margarets, St. Michaels, St. Peters, St. Lawrence and St. James, and I believe the words "All Saints" came at the end thus: " St. James, All Saints". Each had its own church. Some were very small, with a round, Saxon tower.

On occasions I ventured out to see the staghounds. The deer was given twenty minutes by law. Hounds were brought out from the stables or barn of hall, farmhouse, hotel or inn wherever we met, and soon the hunt disappeared across the country.

Thus began a phase which I did not attempt to resist—the vain glories of the chase.

## CHAPTER XLII

### LONDON SKETCH CLUB

LETTERS were rare things at Mendham—so rare that the breakfast-table wore an entirely new aspect if a letter lay on my plate. A letter was an event then.

One morning, full of plans for the day, I came downstairs, and behold, the table looked different—a letter was there; its post-mark, Finchingsfield. I had never heard of such a place. The letter was from one of my Paris friends of the Atelier Julian, Captain Warden. From his letter he seemed to be at work, or play, in a school of animal painting under Frank Calderon. He begged me to go and stay, and sent a message from Calderon.

I went, and found Warden in rooms at a baker's in the village street. If ever I saw an Arcadian scene it was at Robjohn's farm at the far end of this peaceful street of ancient houses. Two placid cows eating cut green clover were standing one nearby the other across the yard. They were hired and paid for, and stood haltered, between posts fixed in the yard, placidly chewing, whilst all around at easels, standing or sitting, was a bevy of damsels and one or two men who didn't count.

Many of these fair creatures belonged to what is known as The County, and one who lived in an ancestral mansion nearby drove over on occasion with a four-in-hand of fast-trotting donkeys. There was even a lady from Ireland who had already captured the heart of Warden.

Gazing at this fresh scene and talking to Frank Calderon, I realised I was a mere plebeian. In studious graceful attitudes, wearing pink or blue or flowered painting-blouses, their shaded faces beneath wide-brimmed summer hats, this mixed lot of animal-painters looked most wonderful to me. A few had attained the dignity of middle age, and gave the rest an air of sobriety, and Mrs. Calderon was about. He who ran all this lived in Robjohn's farmhouse as headquarters, and each student paid so much for the summer term.

Harvest was just ending, and the scent of carted corn, poppies still blooming, and the creak of a passing waggon laden with a last load—even a "gleaner with patient look"—were part of this simple scene.

It was there that I first met Olive Branson, who could draw

like a wizard, and who afterwards introduced me to all those West-Country gypsies when she was working near Alton in Hampshire during the hop-picking in 1913.

She was the best student at Finchfield, and stood miles apart from the rest. The kindest and sweetest person. The others called her mother. Three of her friends shared a studio in Circus Road, N.W., and all were getting brown and handsome in this country air. Before I made my departure from Arcady I had an invitation to call at Circus Road, which I did later, and thus through Warden, "The Cap." of Julian's, did I make the step which took me again to the Langham Sketch Club of fame, and later to the London Sketch Club, which led to more and more happenings.

Thanks to these paint-covered delightful young women, I soon was to know Clifford—or Cliffy, as they called him—a member of the R.I., and the head of St. John's Wood School of Art. He invited me to one of those Friday night suppers at the Langham Sketch Club in All Souls' Place. *Mendham was fast vanishing*. I see the fellows now, all drawing from a nude model. *Punch* artists were there; Willy Hatherell was there. All the men whose names I knew were there, and they even knew my work shown at the Academy.

Then came the supper. In these rationed days it may cause anguish if I tell of the cold food on the long table surrounded by men of fame or no fame. There they all sat eating, drinking beer, and talking. Clifford, a man of fifty or sixty, with a bronzed face and very black hair, and trimmed beard and brown eyes, had taken me there, and soon I was one of them. Who wouldn't be? Two illustrators who worked on the *Illustrated London News* and *Graphic* seized me. One, a member of the Belsize Club, a boxer and swimmer of fame, named Arthur Gough, and the other Cyrus Cuneo, became my friends of the Cheshire Cheese in Fleet Street, where in later days we sat on Friday evenings in a partitioned-off pew and ate the pudding and drank beer, and sang choruses in a growler all the way up the Strand and home.

The London Sketch Club came next. There I used to see Hassall, Tom Brown and even Dudley Hardy, whose famous poster for the Gaiety Girl was all over London. This was true Bohemia, as it happened before photography and its many processes killed black-and-white illustration. Years before and until then world-famous men had climbed through illustration to hold high places in Art.

It was in a house and studio in West End Lane, once occupied by John Gulich, painter of a long-forgotten, long-unseen water-

colour, "A Violin Concerto", belonging to the Tate Gallery, that I used to stay with Arthur Gough for Langham evenings.

Again, to show how far I was getting from the simple life, Nick Everitt, the bachelor lawyer who let me rooms above his chambers in Norwich, arranged a visit to London, where we stayed at the Metropole in Northumberland Avenue—a place I had only read of in Marie Corelli's *Sorrows of Satan*. In the evening he dressed himself like "The Spider" in the "Winter King" play: an opera hat, boiled shirt, shiny studs, and an opera-cloak over all. Dressed in this fashion, he made me again feel a plebeian as he hailed a hansom which took us to dine at the old Globe. The Empire, the Alhambra or the Tivoli came next. The Ballet was on at the Empire, and Madame Genée was dancing.

Variety programmes at music-halls were brilliant. What stars we saw! Arthur Roberts, Dan Leno, the White-eyed Kaffir, Marie Yohe and Marie Lloyd, the greatest.

I've got a little cat,  
And I'm very fond of that;  
But I'd rather have a bow, wow, wow.

That was the sort of song we listened to and laughed at after a drink at the back of the old "Prom" at the Empire. And there was Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay:

You should see me out with Pa,  
Prim and so particular,  
The fellows say, "Ah, there you are!!"  
Pa thinks that peculi-ah!  
I like their cheek, I say, and so  
Off again with Pa I go, etc.

How wonderful! What nights they were! And what girls we met at the old Empire! What figures! What dresses!—long skirts and lovely hats these goddesses wore.

We may have dined at the old Globe, but I'm sure we had supper there, too, where the lighting was so beautiful.

Looking back, I see a stage with footlights, a rich background of romance—trees—terraces. A lovely figure stalks in, wearing an enormous pink hat with ostrich plumes over her curls. She is divine. She wears a short, pink satin cape. Her long, peerless limbs are in pink tights. Pink shoes with high heels. There she stands, magnificent, adorable; and she begins to sing "Sweet Rosy O'Grady".

We went to the Academy, the New Gallery, the National Gallery, and, satiated at last with the sights of London, returned home to provincial and country life.

A photograph of a Mendham picture of that date lies before me. Old Bob Riches, the thatcher—pipe in mouth, wearing a slouch hat, sleeve waistcoat and cords—sits in his cart, driving an aged, dark chestnut mare, at a slow walk along the lane behind the church. The trimmed churchyard fence makes a line across the picture—I like parallel lines—another line is the south side and roof of the church. This was a forty-by-thirty canvas, painted in sunlight, and Riches posed for it two mornings running. Having seen the work of the Spaniard, Sorolla, I was trying to paint more swiftly. When painting Riches in the lane, Mr. Wharton, my landlord, who farmed Walsham Hall and Shearings, came along in his low gig, pulled up and stopped. Knowing that I was contemplating a move, he sat watching the picture. His kind, bearded face was thoughtful, the reins hung loosely on the dash-board, his sixteen stones weighed down the springs of his gig on one side. He gave his warning: "Don't leave this country, Alfred. It's brought you luck. Mark my word," said he, and drove slowly on.

No living soul could listen to such words unheeding; but the die was cast.



## GOOD-BYE TO MENDHAM

**M**Y Uncle Arthur, who used to put me in front of him on his horse when I was a small boy, married the daughter of a comparatively wealthy farmer, and had lived and died at Church Farm, Swainsthorpe, five miles from Norwich. His widow, Aunt Polly, had again married, a well-to-do bachelor, a Mr. Hill, who farmed in a large way at Mulbarton, the next parish. It was there that the accident happened to my right eye, and there that I went to stay from time to time.

I am reminded that they invited me to stay when I was making my first equestrian portrait of T. O. Springfield, the Master of the Dunston Harriers. The rosy-faced, and often irate, sportsman sat for me on a wooden saddle-horse in the stable yard of his house, The Rookery, clapping his hand on his thigh, relating stories of the past, when he hunted the Waterford Fox-hounds.

Staying a week-end later on when I was painting his horse, Mangreen, he gave an exhibition of wrath in the harness-room. Just out from morning church, wearing a silk hat and tail coat, he was cursing a lad who had missed a spot of rust on a stirrup-iron. He ended by warning him that if such a thing ever happened again, he would give him —. I leave the rest to the reader's imagination.

During these visits to Mulbarton I had often taken a look at Church Farm, Swainsthorpe, and saw its possibilities. What a home for me! It was a similar house to Shearings Farm, Mendham. The same lay-out, but it stood a long way back from the road in a lovely country. An oldish couple—Mr. and Mrs. Lodes—lived in the kitchen end. The rest of the house was unoccupied. Lodes was yardman on the place, and his wife managed the dairy and made the butter. What butter it was! as I found out later. The thought of it made me more anxious to live there. I unburdened my soul to Aunt Polly, who had no sentiment and was all for business. When we put the matter to Mr. Hill, God bless his memory, he was only too glad to let me the rest of the house—four rooms, two up and two down—for ten pounds a year: the same rent as I was paying at Mendham. All being settled, a firm in Norwich got the rooms ready. My parlour walls were covered with thick, dull-surfaced, greyish-green



paper. All was ready for the move, and more—Mr. Hill gave me permission to put up a studio in the meadow behind the house.

A fellow student of the old Norwich School of Art days, a designer at Boulton and Paul's of Norwich, made plans for a sectional studio with the correct pitch of roof on the north side for the skylight. Later, when settled in Swainsthorpe, two vans, each drawn by a pair of huge horses, arrived in the meadow with the sections loaded on them. In a week the new studio—a clearly cut, unforgotten picture—stood there, and remained, sturdy and strong, in the meadow behind the house until 1919, when it was taken down after the first war, put on the rail and set up here at Dedham, with an additional length added. Looking out of the window as I write, I see it across the meadow, afternoon sun streaming on it, swallows skimming the grass and returning to their nests under its eaves, and a fat, bay horse grazing near. The whole scene has a long-established look, and I feel I have lived a century.

Many years ago I saw it built at Swainsthorpe after forsaking the carpenter's shop at Mendham, with its forty-foot floor, where Gerald Stones, the Grays, Norman and I had played the fool and marched up and down in triumph to the smell of fried sausage and mash. Were I then as I am now, older, experienced and loving the soil more and more, wild horses would not have drawn me from that studio and those sausage nights.

Good-bye to the skewbalds, to Charlotte's pony, the churchyard fence, to Gray and his old gun, which he carried as he posed by a stream for a picture called "The Offending Rat"—his last picture. I hear the sound of the Redenhall bells over the hill across the river; I see Ephraim Butcher with two buckets of pigs' food swinging from a yoke across his shoulders.

The sound of bells dies away like the bells on the B.B.C. Ephraim's rotund figure with the pails fades out.

Now and then I missed Norman coming to look in. I missed the half-door at the end, with the brown mare's head showing through. I missed the passing of waggon and cart along the road. Instead of village gardens, I looked out on a country of fields and a spinney on the skyline. Cows and cart-horses were outside grazing. My new man got a harness-room in order. Like Mrs. Corbyn, Mrs. Lodes cooked and found food and did my rooms and washing for fifteen shillings a week, and was glad to do it.

She saw me slowly and gradually develop into an "amazing man". She saw me off on hunting mornings with: "Mind you

don't be getting into trouble", or, "I shall expect ye when I see ye". Old Lodes, grey-headed, grey-bearded, a son of the soil, in soil-stained sleeved waistcoat and corduroy trousers tied under the knee, smoking his pipe, suffering from rheumatism, came and went, saying little, and taking Epsom salts in warm water each morning.

In Swainsthorpe there was a more sophisticated atmosphere than at Mendham. Farmers drove into Norwich on Saturdays with high-stepping hackneys in rubber-tyred ralli carts with red or yellow wheels. Mr. Hill, a breeder of hackneys, drove a stepper, Hamlet—a liver chestnut, in the Stud Book. I have driven into Norwich with my Aunt Polly behind that mover, looking in the plate-glass windows as we went down St. Stephen's to put up at the Boar's Head. These horses scarcely touched the road in their action. Fourteen miles an hour was an average for many.

Church Farm was a warm, cosy house, and Swainsthorpe was in what I should call the heart of agricultural Norfolk. I was soon familiar with it on horseback, for I rode almost every afternoon. Woodlands lay along the skyline of uplands on the far side of a river valley where I often rode. A gated road by Swainsthorpe Hall led along to large white mills at Stoke Holy Cross, where a bridge crossed the river. This gated road led to another which I followed to Caistor, my point being the old Roman Camp:

Caistor was a town when Norwich was none,  
Norwich was built of Caistor old stone.

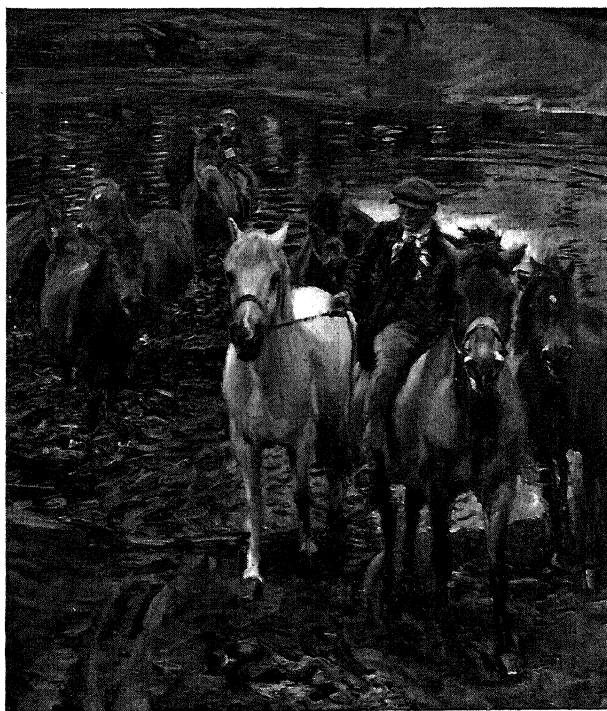
From that hoary earthwork near the flint-built church, half hidden by the foliage of oaks, gnarled, stunted, split with age, I have looked across the fields and valley to Dunston Woods, and have satisfied myself that the domestic landscape of our country is beautiful, romantic and restful. I have walked that journey just to lie on those ancient mounds with the evening coming on, listening, watching, my dog doing the same, but with more intensity, he thinking of rabbits, his owner of Gray's "Elegy" and the line, "Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight". Environment means a lot.

We have our pet walks and places to wander in. When there are a score more tracks and ways open to choice, the same inclination for the old walk guides our footsteps. Why? Because the lie, the slope of the land, the shape of trees, a group of stacks, a row of poplars, or even a turn in a lane make a succession of pictures that we love.



Above: "The grey weather subject I prepared for was 'The Ford'. Grey water and dark reflections broken by lines of the current."  
See page 239.

Right: "Painting was resumed by another river, the Waveney." Painted at the back of the Mill at home. See page 246.





*Detail of unfinished picture of Gray as huntsman. “‘For God’s sake blow!’ said I, anxious to get the expression.” See page 248.*

*Right: A bust of my father by Whitney-Smith which we named: ‘The President’s Father’.” See page 247.*



*“In addition to the bust, Whitney-Smith made two little statuettes, as a pair, which were afterwards cast in bronze, of old Gray and his wife, Charlotte.” See page 249.*

My rides lay all around. No part of that country was spoiled by unsightly urban development to shun or avoid. I rode every afternoon in the winter, often because my dog said, "Let's go". Whichever way I chose had its distinct beauties. Mounting my steed at the stables, the mood where to go would be upon me before I reached the road. For instance, I might feel like going past the church, across the turnpike and over a common grown with tall oaks. A wheelwright's shop and buildings and cottages stood beyond the trees. The lane led through the common gate to low meadows, and thus to a road which, for me, was all romance.

An inn stood on a knoll by the road, which sloped uphill by woods and timbered parklands. On the brow of the hill was a signpost, and there I turned right-handed into a lane between steep banks, with holly-bushes and park paling on either side. This led down to a remote mill and ford. Uphill once more, by ancient, weather-worn trees, the western sky on my right already staging an early sunset. At the top of this lane, on a crossways, I turned right and homewards, facing the west, a scene of desolate beauty. The wet lane reflected the sky. Heavy storm-clouds with fiery edge moved across the dark, wooded horizon. Straggling flocks of rooks and jackdaws passed overhead, their cries and cawing mingling with the humming of the rising wind, now making its solemn chords of eternity through the bare branches of the spreading oaks under which I rode. With the last flare from the funeral pyres in the west, "the sunbeam strikes across the world".

Back at Church Farm, the dog, Joe, shakes himself in the hall. Old Mrs. Lodes, her face worn with striving, her eye still bright, would say, "Looks as though there's suffin' comin'; rain or suffin'. We got yew some nice sprats for tea."

I happen to be alone here to-night in my Dedham home with another dog. I listen. The wind moans outside in the old wellingtonia and whines faintly through the closed shutters. I try hard to get in touch with Joe, my little companion of the past. Where are those ghosts? Dear, old, simple-hearted Mrs. Lodes. Her old, uncomplaining husband, part of the soil, who could scarcely sign his name. Bacon was not rationed then. They cured their own; sides of it. Farm butter was theirs to eat. Mrs. Lodes made lovely bread. Thoughts of their tea-table in the kitchen, with geraniums in the window, make me feel as hungry as hell as I write.

These were happy rides. We can't put the clock back. Char-a-bancs, lorries, motor-cars are here. Only those of my own way

of life and generation know what the Norfolk country was like then, when the by-roads were quiet, seldom used, and where a dog was safe to take his way. The main roads were more pleasant and safe than lanes are to-day.

Swainsthorpe had advantages. It was the first station out from Norwich, five miles away. Mr. Gunton, the station-master, with mutton-chop whiskers, was a kindly and obliging soul, who looked the part in his station-master's clothes. My pictures travelled with his blessing, and I boxed my hunters to far-off meets from that raised wooden platform above the fields.

By train it was a quarter of an hour to Norwich. Often returning from a jaunt in the city the guard's van was opened to put out some antique piece of furniture. If I missed the last train, rather than stay in my Norwich rooms, I preferred the walk home, the last miles being taken across country in the moonlight, and if no moon, I was guided by familiar tree-shapes against the sky.

There were days when I rode into Norwich and put my horse up at livery stables in St. Giles Street. A famous veterinary, Mr. Fred Lowe, owned this establishment. There was a large shoeing-forge in the premises, which were entered under an archway leading into a courtyard. At the top side, by the large Georgian house, stood a row of tubs with geraniums. I got into a habit of joining the company assembled at the vet.'s house on Saturday afternoons, around a long tea-table at which Mrs. Lowe presided behind a tall silver urn. The sound of the anvil in the forge across the yard could be heard between the talk and clatter of cups. At last a fit, hard-looking blue roan cob in an American buggy on light wheels was brought to the door, and Jack Cooke, the Master of the Norwich Staghouids, and his friend, Harry Oliver, made their departure for Brooke Lodge, on the Bungay road. Then another and yet another went—George Cowling of Catton, Fred Gowing of Hellesdon and Stephen Sutton of Rackheath. Thus the large dining-room, hung with sporting prints and filled with cigarette smoke, gradually emptied, and perhaps the daughters played the piano and sang a song. When the rest left it was not always to go home, but sometimes to a snug bar on St. Giles Hill for a while, and from there to dine at the Maid's Head.

The foremost man of all that bunch, after Frederick Lowe, was the great Jack Cooke from Brooke. It would take six chapters to write of him and his dealings and doings with horses. I reserve him for later pages.

## AN OPEN-AIR STUDIO

GEORGE CURZON was the high-sounding name of my new groom at Swainsthorpe. Never was a master, calling himself an artist, better understood or served. Winter mornings and afternoons passed as, dressed in scarlet, he posed on a horse. At last I was seeing the colour of a scarlet coat in the sun, the sheen of a clipped horse, with the lighting on fences, tree-trunks, fields.

Clipped horses were my problem then, as they are to-day. A friend, who had gone to Monte Carlo, lent me a good-looking chestnut thoroughbred for a season. I have had painting thrills in life, but never such a one as when I began the horse on a sunny November morning.

My lad, in scarlet, sat on him in the corner of a meadow, where a holly-fence sheltered them from what wind there was. The horse was a new inspiration—an entirely new exercise in paint. That first lesson with him is not forgotten. The horse had a well-kept mane and tail, and the warm colouring of these Nature's assets made strong contrast with the paler, subtle beauty of his clipped-out appearance.

With, now and then, a hunt in between, I worked outside through the winter. Bare, trodden patches where I had stood told the story of hard work, cold hands and feet. To-day I shirk preliminary difficulties, calling men from the stables to help me out with the heavy easel and big canvas and the rest of my things. The continual setting-up and taking down of large canvas sun- and wind-screens became irksome, although when done I worked in comfort. Making studies in the open is the easier, slacker way, and I take it. Not until I begin working in the studio from these studies do I find it as difficult as my old method. Nothing is easy. There are moments when, with a fresh eye, I do what I want to do. Should I then fondly believe all looks right, I lay down brushes and palette, turn the easel round, and forget the picture for a week. At last I walk in, hang up my hat and face the canvas. God help me! What do I see? Did I make that abortion?

Critical capacity grows with senile decay. Which is the better to possess? This capacity demanding more than senility can

achieve, or ignorant, youthful pride, satisfied with half achievement?

They were stirring times when I used direct attack which led me to what I thought were victories. I was steeped in assurance and conceit. I believed, as Mrs. Lodes was soon to learn, that I was, like Mr. Puffington in *Sponge's Sporting Tour*, an "amazin' man".

A geographical survey of my painting-grounds at that period seems appropriate. To enable me to present the familiar scene in front of the house which I had known for eight years, I have placed before me an old painting of it, done in early summer, showing the wide space between the house, covered with beach shingle from Lowestoft, iron railings and entrance gate. The shingle was always dry and clean. On the left are two long, grass-bordered rose-beds that I laid out. The standard rose-trees are in new leaf, and an apple-tree in bloom. Beyond that is the cow-house, and across the outer yard a large barn. Going out through the iron entrance gate, the barn was on the left. On the right were my stables and an orchard. The harness-room was next to the dairy, and nearby a gate led from the front yard to the stables and meadows and studio, which stood behind the house. Straight ahead the drive led out to the road from Swainsthorpe to Mulbarton. Opposite, by a horse-pond, were cattle-yards and more buildings of the Church Farm. Beyond was a gravel-pit, over-run in summer with masses of white flowers and scarlet poppies.

At this time a white pony stepped into my life. I bought him one Saturday in Norwich from Drake, an old acquaintance, a dealer in horses, who was always about near the Bell Hotel on Saturdays. I see him now; his pale-blue, watery eyes, his scrubby moustache, his horsey clothes trimmed with velvet, a black silk scarf round his neck, a gold ring on his finger. He carried a long, brass-bound whip. The grin on his face showed that he possessed a kind soul. "Look, Mr. Munnin's," said he, "'e 'on't 'ev nothin' to dew wi' a cart or 'arness, but what a beautiful pony for a picture!" And so the pony came to Swainsthorpe to be my property until he died. He stands in the Sandpit picture this very year (1948) at the Academy, hung on a corner of the Central Gallery. The picture had never seen a frame and had remained discarded after I finished it in 1911; never shown, always stored in attic, outhouse or studio until it went to the Royal Academy this spring.

One Sunday, before the opening of the Exhibition, I was working on one of my pictures in Gallery III. Later in the



day I took a critical glance at the Sandpit painting. In the quiet loneliness of the Galleries it set me thinking of the 1911 summer when working in Suffolk. Painted thirty-eight years ago, I knew I could not do it to-day. I had neither the energy to get ponies to a place forty miles away, make arrangements for them, nor to place a canvas and easel each day in the heat in the same place in the sandpit. Far more than that—those “days of yore” are gone.

These reveries gave way at last to further critical regard of this 1911 picture. It needed cleaning! With a basin of hot water, nail-brush and towels, this was done. After wiping it with a sponge, the liquid surface showed me the white pony in his glory. The picture glowed. The next day I telephoned to a restorer to bring some good varnish and give it a thin coating. Seeing it afterwards made my day. I called it “Days of Yore”. The picture sold for seven hundred and fifty pounds. It should never alter or crack, for it was painted in the open, with no messing about. Not a stroke of paint was put on it since the last done in the sandpit.

For guidance, I now take a look at the list of my pictures which were hung from 1899 to 1948 without a break.

My eye, running down the list, charged with memories, stops at 1908, when the pony first began to appear on canvas. Two were hung: “On the Road”, and “The Old Gravel-pit”. I remember both, and the pony—Augereau, as we called him—is in each picture. In the first the pony is in a yellow-wheeled gig. George seated in it, wearing a sleeve waistcoat, a wide sun-hat and coloured scarf, is leaning forward, elbows on knees, reading a newspaper as they move along. Ponies on halters fastened to the gig-rail follow behind, others trot on ahead. The picture was painted during a succession of bright October days, the sun casting pale shadows, dust rising from the road as the ponies and gig pass through a setting of autumn foliage.

The second picture of that year—1908, “The Old Gravel-pit”—was painted in the pit by the farm buildings over the road. The summer when I painted this picture—1907—was not too fine. A glorious September helped me to complete what I had begun. Memory records weather connected with a period of work on an out-of-door picture. More so if that picture were a success, which this one was for me.

Here is the scene of “The Old Gravel-pit”. I faced the sun, which was slightly to the right. Thank God for afternoon sunlight casting longer shadows! The shadows of the pit were warm and glowing; the gravel bright red and gold in the sun; scarlet poppies, marguerite daisies and masses of white flowers

all about. The white pony, tied to a long line, with a blaze of light on his back, in the centre, and others grazing near. Cast shadows made the design. The size was fifty by thirty inches, and it was hung in a centre on the line. I found it on Varnishing Day with a small gathering of artists round it. My St. John's Wood friends were there. Moreover, Sir David Murray and others introduced themselves to me, congratulating me on the picture. There stood Augereau in warmth and sunlight. What a pony! The picture was sold on Private View day for a hundred and fifty pounds, which so far was my top figure.

The pony appears again in 1909, in "The Path to the Orchard". I looked into the sun doing this. A girl in white linen hat and apron leading him across the picture along the path by the river at Mendham. Clumps of white and crimson phlox in the garden were the foreground; blue water, trees and the lawn fence on the far bank the background. In 1910—"The Watering", a long, narrow picture. In 1911—"The Ford", a large failure; skied: ponies coming towards you out of a stream. In 1912—"Shade", ponies under trees with a lad: hung on the line and sold to the Sydney gallery. "The Wind on the Heath", also sold—Augereau was not only bringing me wealth, but earning his own keep a hundredfold.

The third picture of 1912—"A Norfolk Sandpit", as it was called—was painted far from Swainsthorpe, in the hot summer of 1911: a happy period of work which comes into future pages. The size of the canvas was six by four and a half feet. I stood in the last room where it was skied, gazing up at it, inwardly cursing the Hanging Committee, thinking of all the hours of work in the blazing sun of the previous year, 1911, knowing there was light and truth in the picture at least. With these thoughts, and taking a parting glance at my defeated ambitions, I became aware of a grey-haired lady who was speaking to me. "So you are the young man who painted this," she said. Someone then introduced us—the lady was Mrs. Annie Swynnerton, and she told me how much she liked the picture, and that it was full of light. This was generous praise from so fine an artist. The scene—Gallery XI—comes back to me: the rather small, frail, grey woman-painter, full of enthusiasm, speaking of this passage and that in the skied picture. These are things one recalls at times as the years pass on.

"A Norfolk Sandpit" afterwards went the round of the provincial Galleries, and finally I gave it to the City of Norwich, where it hangs in the large Art Gallery, and I am not ashamed of it—it taught me a lot.

Yet another study of this subject painted in the same place and year—1911—in a far-off corner of Norfolk, was shown in the Academy as late as 1946. Its title is "The Old Sandpit", its size fifty by forty inches. For me it has often been a habit or method of work—this carrying on simultaneously of two canvases; a lesser one to make sure, should the weather break, and—weather permitting—the larger work being carried on, too, each getting a spell off to harden. The advantage of such a method is that you gain a stride now in this one, now in that. Here was another piece of money-spinning on the part of the long-departed Augereau. Having had it hanging on my walls for many years, it was sold for seven hundred and fifty pounds in the Academy Exhibition of 1946.

Augereau was the most picturesque of white ponies—an artist's ideal. A white horse has been used in many pictures by many artists. Augereau's name may go down to posterity as the last of his disappearing race to pose as a model for a picture.

Some may wonder why I called the pony Augereau. My lad, George Curzon, who acted as groom and general factotum at Swainsthorpe, spent his spare time persuading the pony to draw a comfortable old yellow-wheeled dealer's gig. This, with the brass-mounted harness to suit, had cost me thirty shillings on Norwich Hill. One day, George, in his quiet way, asked me if I'd like to go for a drive.

"With what?" I asked.

"Why, with the white pony and gig."

"But he won't be driven," said I.

"'E's all right and 'appy now; 'ave a ride and see."

So we got into the gig and trundled gently along as if this had gone on for always.

One afternoon George persuaded me to let him drive me up to Norwich, five miles off, and go to the Theatre Royal. We went, and got there without a hitch; put the pony up in an inn yard nearby, and saw the play "A Royal Divorce". I sat in the circle, and George in the pit. Among the characters in that play is Marshal Augereau, who continually exclaims, "I swear it on the word of an Augereau".

This sentence so impressed itself on our minds that after some refreshment we sent the pony along on our return journey at a good pace in the moonlight, and if he flagged, gave him one, calling out, "I swear it on the word of an *Augereau*!" Soon we were going at a good hand-gallop, the springs of the yellow gig keeping time with the up-and-down motion of the pony.

"Get on, Augereau!" I called again, and on he went.

Thus he was named Augereau, and after that drive became a useful worker in society.

The pony figured in another picture—a picture of real life. One fine Sunday morning, my friend Morgan, whose father owned the Theatre Royal in Norwich, came over early for a little fun which we had arranged overnight in Norwich. Both of us were soon dressed up in my hikey dealer's suits, wearing the right hats and silk scarves. Not a detail was wrong. In those check patterns, with black velvet collars and trimmings, we looked a pair of stunners. Seated side by side, smoking our pipes, we jogged along in the yellow-wheeled gig, with Augereau, got up to the last word, in the shafts. So true was our costume that not a soul noticed us as being anything out of the way. Our triumph came when we drove into the yard of our favourite haunt—the Green Dragon at Wymondham. Our best friend, the landlord, didn't know us.

"Look," said he, shaking a fist at us, "we don't want any o' the likes o' you in here on a Sunday. Off ye go!"

We laughed until we nearly fell out of the gig, the old landlord joining in.

"Well," said he, "you sold me fairly that time, but you wait."

It was a grand sell. Augereau was put in the stable and given a good feed for that. He was a grand feeder.

I have already told of how I gave this pony to my mother for her four-wheeler. Here is a reference to Augereau in my mother's diary which has interest:

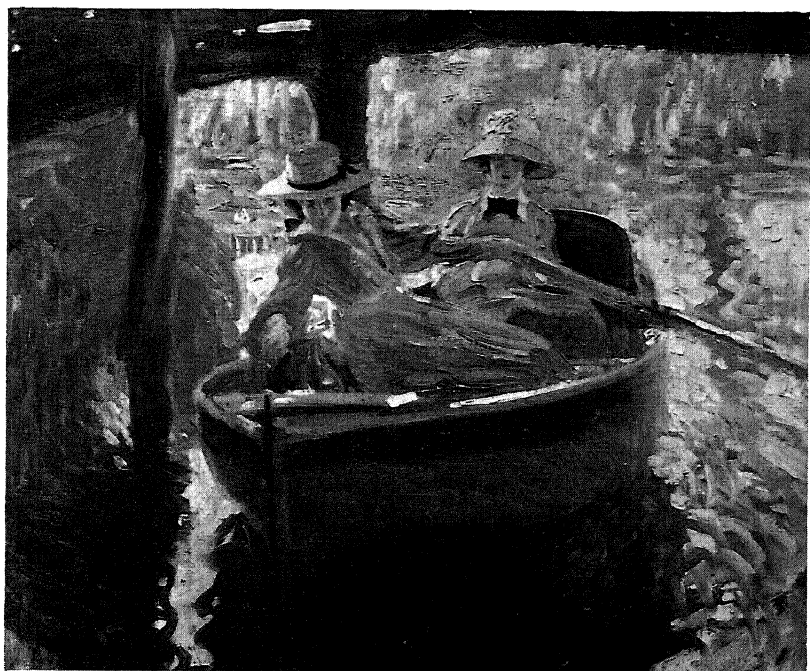
"This Sunday, November 3rd, is a typical November morning, which makes one feel lonely and sad. The sun trying to pierce the gloom all round. The dear old white pony is feeding on the front meadow. Cold and gloom does not affect him. He is most useful. Only last evening the poor old fellow had to take Seaman and the boy through the river with the icy water up to his belly, to look for a cow which, missing the others, had strayed away. I don't think they could have got the other pony through."

Good old Augereau! No wonder he faced the cold water, Horses never forget. For days, weeks, he stood for me in winter in the cold river, only to help a picture. Here he was helping to bring back a cow, a much more useful object.

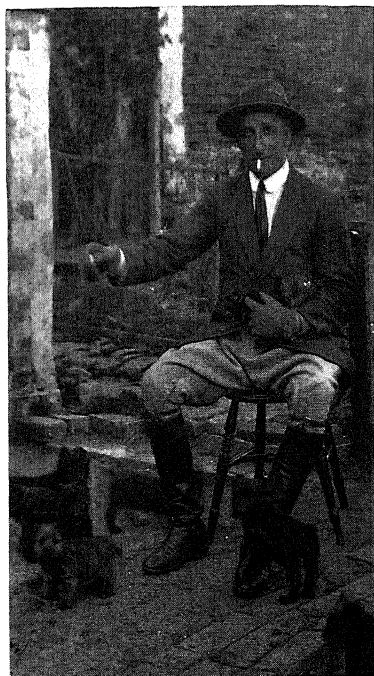
This glimpse of Mendham reminds me that the pony ended his pleasant existence in a good home where he became a friend and was never asked to travel faster than two and a half miles an hour. He has departed this life long since, and—who knows? I may be painting him again amongst poppies and marguerite daisies.



*My dog Joe. "He was the most faithful, queer little companion in the world."  
See page 251.*



*The old boathouse. 1906. See page 251.*



Left: Dick Bullard and myself. See page 257.  
 Right: "Frank Jones has been spoken of as one of the best horsemen over a country in his day." See page 263.



$24'' \times 18''$   
*The Huntsman (tempera).* "I would like to add that this is an exact portrait of my friend of yore, the brown mare." See page 274.

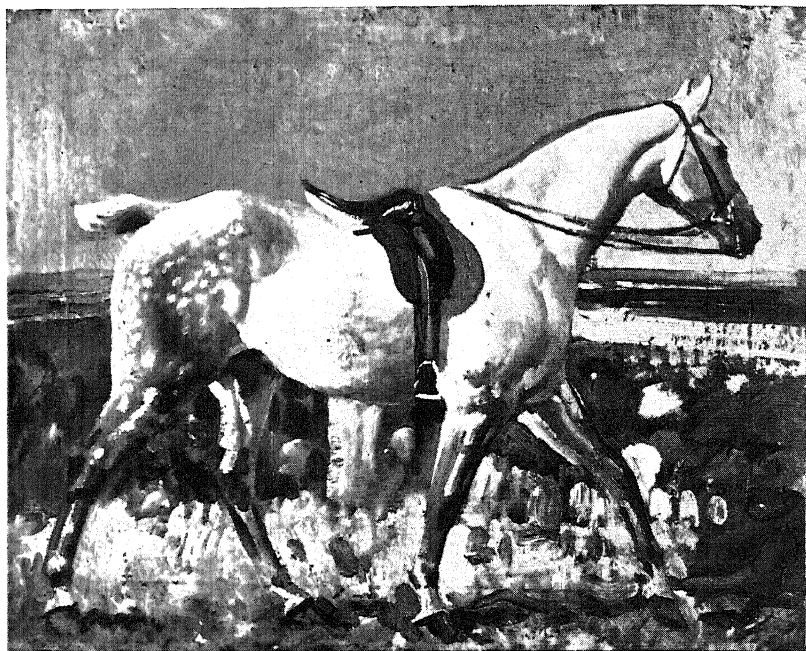


$44'' \times 24''$   
 "Ned, on the grey, at the top of Zennor Hill, near a hoary pile of granite rocks."  
 See page 277.



$24'' \times 20''$   
 "Yet another picture of Ned on his grey was bought by the Newcastle Art Gallery."  
 See page 278.





24" × 18"  
 "Described as 'grey mare' 15.2 hands, six years old." See page 283.



30" × 25 "  
 "Working away at two contented cows standing placidly in the stream." See page 280.



## DICKY DOWSON

EIGHT years is a long period in a lifetime. During those years—allowing for many diversions—I seem to have done a lot of work. Some pictures of that date were bought for public galleries and, what is more, I was earning a living, and, if not wealthy, I avoided insolvency. But there were narrow shaves. For instance, the other night, when putting on an old dinner-jacket that I still wear when in retrospective mood, I was reminded of a crisis and a deliverance. About then I was climbing into higher circles, and this, my first evening turnout, was made by a tailor—a kind soul, who never sent in a bill until it was large enough to make a debtor think.

Bills have a way of coming in shoals, and one morning, with others, a stinger came from the tailor, including the price of the evening suit. Worse than that, I next opened an innocent-looking envelope to find a warning from the bank at Norwich that my account was overdrawn! The cause of the overdraft was a reckless purchase of a set of four Sheffield-plated candlesticks and six silver salt-cellar at a sale. The day after the sale I went to Briston Sheep Fair in Norfolk, and while having a glass of sherry with the auctioneers, I wrote them a cheque for the candlesticks and salt-cellar bought at Wacton, and went out to see the fair of 20,000 sheep—a sight then well worth seeing, never to happen again in an age of vanishing sheep.

Shortly after this came the overdraft warning, sending a tremor down my spine. Two horses' heads looking out of the stable doors . . . and a man . . . and Mrs. Lodes to pay on Saturday! My wits rose to the occasion. I remembered that a lady in a large hall in the neighbourhood owed me twenty-five pounds for a water-colour of her children on ponies. Thank God, her cheque came in answer to my letter. There was still the tailor's bill and other "accounts rendered"! Bullard's Brewery Company in Norwich had written me a week before, asking me to do them, as usual, another yearly calendar design. Never did I sit down to do a job with such an intent to finish it and get the money. The result may yet be seen on the front of all Bullard's houses around Norfolk. A Georgian landlord in long red waistcoat, mug in hand, standing by his door, like old Willet in *Barnaby*

*Rudge*. The price—ten pounds—came by return. The next to save the sinking ship was a large early picture, "The Vagabonds", sold to a dealer in Norwich for thirty pounds. Parting with other work at the same rate gave me a respite for a while.

A real deliverance from evil came quite unexpectedly. One Sunday morning a flash turnout arrived in the yard. It was Dicky Dowson and his wife. He was driving a famous trotting mare that had beaten all records by doing eighteen miles in an hour on the turnpike. Dowson, a hunting friend—truly a friend in need—was a rich Norwich bookmaker. He lived in a house known as Mugs' Hall. He brought "the missus", as he called his wife, to have a look at pictures, and he bought some. The six silver salt-cellars were put on the table, and Mrs. Dowson wanted them. We had a deal, throwing them in with the pictures. All being settled by cheque, Dicky invited me to a Coursing Club dinner in Norwich, of which club he was a staunch patron. I accepted with a full heart. At the dinner, sitting next to my host, I listened to speeches on the sport of coursing. During a lull, Dowson turned to me and made an offer of one hundred and fifty pounds for a picture which he had seen on the Sunday, for which I had asked him three hundred pounds. The dinner—the champagne—the rustling of all the notes were too much for me, and I took the notes. The picture—an early one, fifty inches by thirty—was a scene at a fair, and Dowson's "missus" liked it because it was "finished"! It was one of the pictures which were not hung at the Academy in 1904. He left it in his will to the Norwich Art Gallery, where it still hangs, and seeing it on my last visit, I thought that it was as good as many I have had on the line.

But the uncertain future loomed ahead for years—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof". I worked on. I painted portraits of horses for people in the neighbourhood for ten pounds each. It was at Shotesham Hall, when I was painting two horses, that I first met the famous Squire Fellowes, then about ninety-two or three. Seeing that the horse I was painting wouldn't prick his ears, he said, "Go in the house and bring out the footman, who's always playing a Jew's harp".

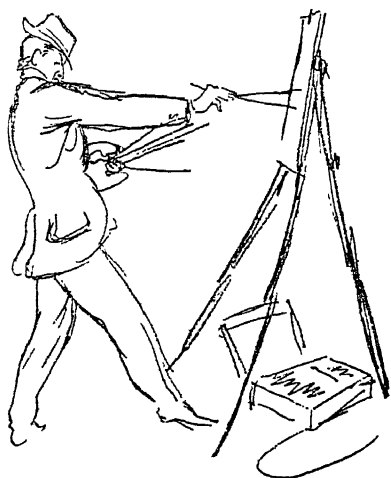
The man came out and played his Jew's harp, and the horse pricked his ears. At lunch I asked the squire if he knew the name of a certain writer on sport.

"He used to hunt," I said.

"Pshaw! all sorts of monkeys hunt," said he.

Then he told me about hunting in Leicestershire and about how Frank Grant, as he called the P.R.A. of that day, had once

taken a fine grey hunter from a Lord Somebody or other in exchange for a portrait of him, and how the horse had broken its back the first day Sir Francis Grant rode him. No man, the Squire said, could hunt five or six days a week in a proper manner in Leicestershire under ten thousand a year. I have since thought of the dilapidated farms on various Norfolk estates in those days.



## CROSTWICK WHITE HORSE

CROSTWICK WHITE HORSE was one more choice for headquarters. Crostwick Common, some miles to the north of Norwich, was noted for its donkeys and geese, and at the farther end, just off the road, stood the White Horse. Like all such perfect places of its kind, it has been dealt with and modernised since then by the brewers. When I last saw the Common a chill came over me, a feeling that much that was beautiful in England was slipping away, that towns were spreading, and that few cared that materialism had come.

This inn was thatched and limewashed, with its tall sign standing some yards away. It was in a different category from the Falcon at Costessey. There were farm buildings about it, and the landlord, Ted Snelling, farmed its forty odd acres. He was a good, comfortable, middle-aged man, with a proper air of the rural landlord about him. His round face shone. He shaved clean, with the exception of a small tuft of beard on the end of his chin.

Besides his wife, his married daughter and son-in-law lived with him. With this household, occupying a private parlour, I lodged in comfort and was fed for fourteen shillings a week. It was there, liking the place on a ride out from Norwich, that I arranged to stay and paint through an autumn. I launched this skirmish from my Norwich rooms, packing my things one morning into an open landau cab, with the help of my old friend and driver, George Claxton, whose rubicund face and silk hat gave us a tone as we trundled along the Cromer Road without a care in the world.

I remember his spreading a clean, summery, light-coloured rug over my knees, and as I reclined luxuriously back on the blue upholstery of the open landau, I admired the driver's broad back, with its two bright silver buttons, and watched the bright light on the silk hat and its shadow cast on his fat, bronzed neck. What happy hours! No rushing past farms, stack-yards, horse-ponds; no fluttering hens getting out of the way; no foolish speeding—just one pleasant, steady journeying to a delightful spot. So unlike travel in a car!

Then came the open Common. There were the donkeys,

young and old, a coloured cow or two, a white horse (in the life) peacefully standing on a knoll—the wind stirring its tail—and geese and ponies. What a Common! I had made many such journeys to Costessey, but the memory of this never-forgotten drive has outlasted all others. The journey ended, the good driver had dinner and his beer, and departed. I did my pictures at Crostwick, painting there undisturbed. An old man, woman or boy fetching a donkey, or roaming children, were part of the scene. Passing traffic on the road mattered little, for most went on the railway then. Here I was in my twenties, with everything around me to paint, when for a few pence a boy was glad to hold a donkey or pony, or pose himself, all day long!

Calm, grey, autumn days followed in succession in that particular year; days with soft, "barred clouds", stretching across the sky. I see the bramble patches, the dark clumps of gorse and purple thorns and yellowing bracken, the donkeys with white muzzles, feeding, and the geese far away near the stream at the end. What would I give to suddenly find myself on the Common as it was then?

Alas, I fear to go there, for it would be entirely altered—not a donkey or a cow; fast, heavy motor traffic has ended all that. And George Claxton, with his horse and the landau in which I had lolled back so luxuriously, so unconsciously, it being a natural mode of travel then—where are they? To trace the horse, the harness, the landau, the whip, the driver, each to the end—what a story! The whip might be found; Claxton had children and grandchildren, I believe. He could be traced to his passing, although Norwich was bombed and has been through processes that happen to old places. And in tracing the worthy cab-driver's existence we might, in some modern workmen's dwelling—or, better still, in some back parlour in an ancient alley or street—find a married, middle-aged grandchild, who had kept the last whip Claxton ever handled,

## ALBY HORSESHOES

THOMAS HARDY wrote:

War makes rattling good history ;  
But peace is poor reading.

For me, the relations of outdoor enterprises are more exciting to recall and write about than indoor periods of routine.

Preliminary preparations and precautions against difficulties which came between me and my object—to work out of doors—were more exciting than getting ready in a studio. With frequent spells of work away from home the years at Swainsthorpe sped quickly. I have been suddenly reminded of one of those spells.

The other day a Bond Street dealer forwarded a photograph of one of my pictures. It had been sent from America, and he was asked to find out if I painted it. Seeing this forgotten picture of a lad with ponies in a grassy lane, the long-buried past was flashed back as clearly as though it were only yesterday.

One Saturday in September, more than forty years ago, I saw Drake in the sale yard near the Bell Hotel at Norwich. He was with the usual throng of horse-dealers and trotting fraternity of the Fox and Goose, Ber Street.

"Mr. Munnin's," said he, staring with his queer blue eyes, "me and the missus and kids with the caravan and hosses are up near Alby. There's a common with geese, ducks, cows, ponies, and I don't know what else, for ye to paint; and you'll see all sorts of blokes at the Horseshoes. Why don't ye come for a week?"

Looking at the gold ring on one of his brown fingers, then at the long, brass-bound whip, at the black silk handkerchief round his neck, I hesitated. This needed consideration.

"I'll meet ye at Aylsham station with a hoss and cart," said he.

Drake and I had one thing in common—a love of life. He knew we'd have a good time if I went to Alby, and, after all, what sort of ties or responsibilities had I? None.

Sure enough, on the Monday he met me and my belongings, and drove me through that beautiful country. Across the years I cannot see the Horseshoes as distinctly as the Falcon at Costessey. I remember a wide green thereabouts with grazing ponies, cows,

donkeys and geese. As I write I long to return and see if memory tallies with the real scene.

Arriving at the Horseshoes, I met one of Drake's myrmidons—an undersized, tough, artful young brigand. He slept under the caravan with the dogs, and had no home of his own, no family ties, no parents that he knew. This son of the wild went by the name of Shrimp. Little did I dream that he would one day become for me an indispensable model, an inspiring rogue, and an annoying villain.

To return to the picture of ponies in a lane. When looking at it, the slumbering cells of memory are so stirred that I recall the painting of every passage in it. The calm, grey sky, the grass banks, not a leaf stirring in the fence; the ponies, the lad in the foreground, for which Shrimp sat, and how afterwards I put my groom, George, there instead. A good portrait of him, although disguised in a sleeve waistcoat. I recall, too, the Horseshoes and queer blokes I was to meet; the intelligent lurchers, and one in particular, which kept Drake's family in a state of good living—Mrs. Drake could cook a hare or pheasant. I see myself with Drake standing at a gate in the moonlight. His dog is coming towards us through the brittle stubble. It carries a hare, which Drake puts into the large pocket in the skirt of his coat; the lurcher pants behind us as we walk back. On the way another hare is found, coursed and caught, "and still the same calm moon".

"Ain't it a lovely night?" said Drake.

He was partial to pints of ale, and his pipe, and a night at an inn; he also had the true instincts of a countryman as well as a love of life. My little companion, Joe, was with me then, as he was on other jaunts, seen but not heard, and never in the way. A small, wise dog, regarding no person but myself. On moonlight nights he never left my heels, not even when the lurcher was out.

A week later I travelled back, in beautiful weather, in company with Drake and his family and horses, sleeping under a hedge at night, wrapped in a horse-blanket which Drake had advised me to bring.

The picture in the lane is reproduced on another page for artist readers or others who may be interested. I wonder if the American who owns that humble effort will ever read my story of it.

## AROUND NORWICH

RINGLAND and Costessey, on the west side of Norwich, are situated in one of the loveliest districts of all the pleasant country surrounding that old city. Although only six to eight miles away, with little perceptible variation, their serenity was unbroken, their peace continuous and unalloyed, the inhabitants living on in the same unaltered ways of life, toiling and resting, their quietude as yet undisturbed by motor horn or sound of tractor.

In the course of my six earlier years as a lithographic artist in Norwich, the valley of the Wensum often led me through Costessey, Ringland, Lenwade, Attlebridge and Felthorpe, or other obscure dreamland hamlets, to seek and find paradise on a bicycle. Passing from water-meadows to uplands and on to bracken-grown common lands and dark belts of woodlands, this country on the west side of Norwich always lured and tempted me along road and lane, in and out of deep shadows cast by many a hedge-row oak, by farm or village church. Not until I found myself at Swainsthorpe, within the six-mile radius of the city, from which wide circle one can see from any point the tall spire of the cathedral—not until I was settled in did I dream that I was within such easy distance of my former paradise.

Reckoning Swainsthorpe six miles south, and Costessey the same distance from Norwich on the west, I realised that my old haunts were not far away, and that beyond the fields, trees and woodlands which ended on the skyline of my new territory a ride on horseback would take me to the Easton Woods on that side of Ringland Hills. The ride happened in the most perfect April weather. With never a passing cloud, the sun shone in divine brilliance throughout the day—a day of sweet-scented airs. My pictures had been sent to the Academy.

I was free!

Throwing off dull cares, forgetting vain hopes, I got on the mare, and, accompanied by my dog, Joe, I left Church Farm behind.

After long days of work, and when the moment for sending away those stubborn pictures had passed, the sight of green buds, of trees coming into full leaf, and fields of young corn, the wood-

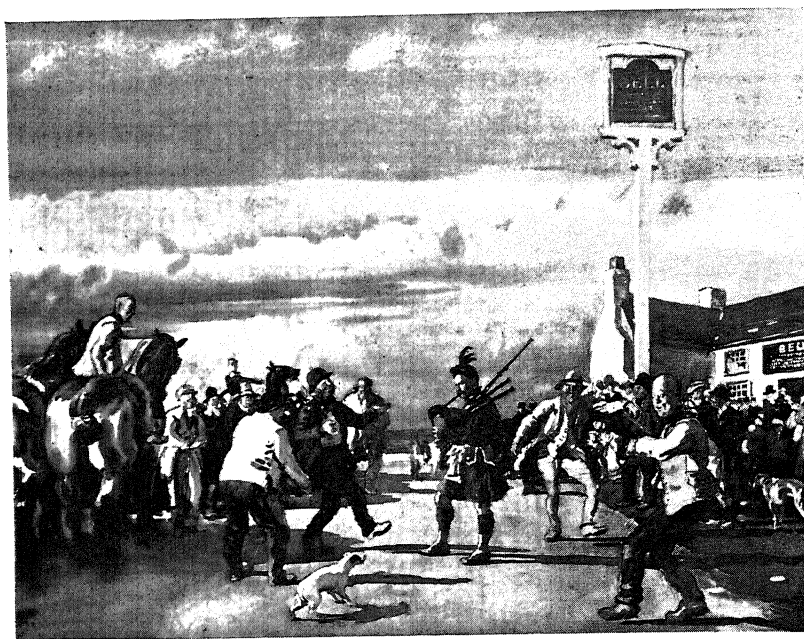




$24'' \times 20''$   
 "I was painting those 'Gyppoes', as I called them, right to the end of hop-picking."  
 See page 289.



$24'' \times 20''$   
 "And sure enough, if I needed it, the large black hat—complete with ostrich feathers . . ."  
 See page 289.



20" × 15"

Water-colour. " 'The Piper' was done in Cornwall with Norfolk memories in mind . . . it might be called a nostalgic picture." See page 292.



14" × 10"

The gardener's daughter (left) and F. H. Crittall, Esq., who bought "The Piper" and other works. Drawn on Derby night at a dinner given by Mr. Crittall at the Great Eastern Hotel to a few artists in honour of my election as Associate of the Royal Academy.

lands, mauve on the skyline, drawing nearer and being left behind, so filled my soul with a holiday spirit of independence and joy, that were I to sit all day at this table trying to convey to others the feeling that possessed me on that ride I should fail. Lord Tennyson reached the heights in those verses:

Now fades the last long streak of snow;  
Now burgeons every mass of quick;  
And around the flowering squares and thick  
By ashen roots the violets grow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long;  
The distance takes a lovelier hue;  
And drowned in yonder living blue,  
The lark becomes a sightless song.

At length, passing by Easton Woods, through the lane closely bordered with trees, I reached the plateau above Ringland Hills. On horseback, I was once again at the spot where, long ago in my youth, I used to arrive on a bicycle. Once more, after all those years, I gazed across the valley to the wooded parklands of Taverham Hall. I had found the way from Swainsthorpe, by signpost and map, to this same plateau where my stained-glass-window friend and I had come on cycles from Norwich in the nineties, and had sat down to eat our food and dry our foreheads on such an April day as this when I had ridden there on horseback.

A cycle was the thing, not a horse. A cycle could be stood against a tree and left. My mare, eager to graze, was a disturbing element, and Joe eyed me eating each crumb, and had half my fare. From the gorse-covered slopes I looked across to Taverham and left-handed to the distant wooden bridge over the river winding below Ringland—a beautiful country.

Later that afternoon I rode down to the road by the river and along past the keeper's thatched cottage and grass sward where Moses Rogers, the cheese merchant from Norwich, fished each Thursday afternoon, wearing a silk hat and white waistcoat, and a flower in his buttonhole. Thus on to the Falcon at Costessey, opposite the park gates, in sight of the Jerningham mansion, its spires and turrets a long silhouette on a skyline of more dark woodlands. I stopped at the Falcon, where in the past my cycling friend and I—not regarding the landlord—always had a high tea. Like other cyclists, we came and went; but on this occasion, in very different circumstances, dismounting from my steed, I asked for the landlord. Although somewhat disconcerted at his superior air (for he had been butler at the Hall), I humbly inquired whether he took lodgers, and seeing that I rode a horse,

he considered the situation. His approval of myself, horse and dog gained on him, and he called a fellow to take the mare.

"Put her in the stable and give her a feed," he said.

Then he took me into the parlour on the left side of the entrance, where I had eggs and tea—how well I remember it—and when I had stood him a drink, and told him my story, he said that seventeen shillings and sixpence a week was his charge, and I agreed to come the following Monday.

In the summer of 1947 I had been given the great honour of receiving the freedom of the City of Norwich. On the following day I motored to those old haunts, passing through the embowered lane to stand again on the familiar ground where long ago, on that April day, I had arrived on horseback, and long before that, on a bicycle.

Little did I dream in those far-off days that I should ever receive the freedom of the city where I was then living. Thoughts crowded fast. I recalled the artists' room at Page Bros., the faces of those who had worked in that room with me: Macready, the head artist, and the rest; Jumbo Betts, the stone-polisher—all vanished. Over the valley the Taverham woodlands were unaltered, the gorse in bloom around me scenting the air, the song of skylarks above.

These arrivals at a particular, well-loved spot where I have been accustomed to wander at different periods of my life, each separated by years of work and play in other places, have given me strange, inexplicable moments of gladness and regret.

Memories of many other things and events, and of the far-away Boer War, lay between the ride on horseback and cycling jaunts from Norwich six years before. Since that ride from Swainsthorpe two world wars had happened, and a thousand other things, before I again found myself at those places, getting out of the car hired from the Maid's Head in June 1947.

The Falcon was no longer the same. It had lost its simplicity and domestic bliss. Mr. Lyons, the landlord with bowler hat and mutton-chop whiskers, was long dead, and the Jerningham mansion (where a Lord Stafford had lived) was razed to the ground, and bungalows were everywhere. A man I was seeking—Drake—had been loyal to his haunts, had settled down in a quiet back lane near the river and was no longer a caravan-dweller. Here I sat with him and heard his story of the years between. He told me that Shrimp had married, grown a beard and nobody knew where he was, but he believed he had been killed by a bomb—a strange and sudden end for such a wild, uncivilised primitive.

But I must get back to the past—to 1908. I arrived that evening at Swainsthorpe full of new purpose. Meeting a landlord who looked like one and just a ride had opened up a new world with fresh ideas. My first short stay at the Falcon was only a feeler for my future painting on Ringland Hills, a mere beginning, a foretaste of things to come.

The Academy Varnishing Day, with its disillusion and sorrows, being over, I returned from London feeling, as usual, less than the dust.

Already I had arranged matters with Drake, who often stayed with his family and caravan near the Bush Inn in Costessey, an establishment of lesser fame—a haunt of harpies of the lower world, connected with the trotting fraternity of Norwich. Dependent on Drake to supply ponies, horses or figures, I was full of resolutions, boiling over, impatient to begin straight away at Costessey and on Ringland Hills, making pictures out-of-doors, in the right environment, with the models I needed.

Here was a lucky start, full of possibilities—the landlord, the place, the river, the hills, the gorse beginning to bloom; horses, ponies and, above all, Shrimp, that utterly uneducated, wild, ageless youth, who slept underneath Drake's caravan. When not wanted, he lay on the dusty ground or grass (each came alike to him), smoked cigarettes, and played with the lesser dogs, lurchers and children. He was a good bare-back rider and sly as a fox. On my instruction Shrimp had gone to Norwich, to a tailor in Dove Street who made clothes for the fraternity, to be measured and fitted for the usual cut of tight cord trousers and black-fronted, sleeve waistcoat—a garment of the past, a Georgian relic. Cut long, with drabbet sleeves and back, a black cloth front with step collar, deep pocket-flaps and black pearl buttons, it was useful and picturesque. Shrimp, thus attired, with a yellow handkerchief round his neck, was a paintable figure. At a fair or market, with customers around, Shrimp, in this guise, ready and waiting, with halters slung round his shoulders, would receive his commands. The voice of Drake would be heard:

“Go in there, boy, and git that bay colt.”

Shouldering into that crowded herd of wild Welsh ponies, Shrimp, borne off his feet in the crush, reached and flung his arms round the unruly, rearing colt. Haltering it at last, with the long halter-rope in his grasp he struggled clear, and other hefty fellows seizing the rope, the plunging victim was hauled from the mob.

I grew to like Shrimp. My memories of him are touched with regret, thinking how much I could have done for him. But I

console myself with the reflection that my last gesture to him was to present him with the dun-coloured horse and blue caravan which, shortly afterwards, was to be added to my painting properties.

The first experiment, living at the Falcon at Costessey as headquarters, was mere child's play to expeditions in the following years.

Those beginnings at Costessey and Ringland—efforts extending to the yard of the Bush Inn, where I painted Drake's vassals and greyhounds—are memories which come crowding too fast to record. It would be futile to attempt a picture, though I recall many.

During the first rehearsal in my new environment I developed a passion for the gorgeous, blazing yellow of gorse in bloom, and looking back, I am sorrowful to think how little I indulged it and how many springs and summers have slipped away since then. No lying in the sun, breathing almond-scented airs, dreaming, listening to the hum of bees and the tiny snapping of gorse-beans bursting in the heat and stillness of noon. Each year when as President I sat in the centre of a dozen men in a half circle in Gallery III, searching and looking for the best work, or later moving through the crowd on Private View day, whilst gorse in bloom on Ringland Hills was scenting the air. Another spring passing to summer in vain for me!

## TO RINGLAND IN FULL FORCE

THERE are those who contend that to exhibit his pictures in public should not be the artist's incentive to work. From another point of view exhibition means open competition. A good thing. Seeing my own work with others showed me my failings.

In 1910, I think it was, Varnishing Day being over, the usual vexations that followed roused me to action. On my return I planned another, longer and more serious painting expedition to Ringland. The gorse was in bloom; to hesitate was foolish. The next Saturday, my inner self persuading me that action was the thing, I found Drake in his usual haunts near the Bell Hotel. Then for twenty pounds I bought a beautiful old white Welsh mare with a long, curly mane and tail and Arab-looking countenance. Her muzzle was blue-black, the same tint surrounded her patient eye, and she slept as she stood there tied to a long iron railing with other fellow-travellers on the road to a future blessed land with no suffering or flies.

These sentiments were not in my mind then. I bought her as a model, and she certainly was a good one. My next deal was a little dark-brown Dartmoor mare, fat and round, with flowing mane and tail, for five pounds. Her wicked ways accounted for this low figure, for she was only five years old. No man alive could harness her to a cart. If placed between the shafts she would certainly kick the cart to pieces. I saw her begin it once when we deceived ourselves that kindness had caused her to forget.

Then I bought a bay yearling colt and a small, dun-coloured horse, to encourage Drake to take an interest in what I was determined to do with such purpose and hurry. A blue caravan was shown to me—a real, proper, boaty, curved van, with the stove-pipe sticking out of its roof on the right side. It had many ribs, and the upper half of its sides overhung the lower half, and the back wheels were under the overhang. Not a vast, towering vehicle like some, the van was large enough and light, and ran well on the road. The figure was reasonable, and I agreed to buy it.

My purchasing powers unweakened by this flight, I next

bought a long, shallow cart, of the kind so often seen with a gypsy family, with brass-bound harness and all complete, for fifty shillings. The same evening, at the Fox and Goose in Ber Street—an ancient inn frequented by the trotting fraternity—I again contacted Drake, who had found Shrimp, and after considerable beer-drinking and arranging for the moving of the caravan, horses and ponies to Swainsthorpe, I bought another pony and a donkey: a poor, humble donkey, impervious to all our talk—so patient. The last train to Swainsthorpe had gone hours ago. Another decision, and I found myself well on the five-mile journey, riding the dun horse, leading the brown mare, with Shrimp riding another, leading the rest with the uncomplaining donkey. The rising moon, the scent of dog-roses, honeysuckle, the smell of road dust, the sounds of horses' feet and the Norfolk voice of Shrimp telling me of his last appearance before the magistrates are still memories that remain clear as day in my mind; clearer still is the arrival at one in the morning at the sleeping farm. The horses, ponies and donkey were put into the meadows behind the house. Mr. Hill did not mind. The world went very well then, and all was harmony—even in the house where Mrs. Lodes and her old husband slept in peace.

I took the lad into my room, and finding a lovely cold rabbit-pie in Mrs. Lodes' larder, and drawing a large jug of the best, we sat down and ate the whole pie and drank the jugful and another. What a pie! What of those squares of white pork lying here and there amongst the rabbit, all embedded in sparkling jelly! The slightest flavouring of onion was beyond belief. Shrimp being full and sleepy, I took him outside to one of the empty loose-boxes and left him in the straw. Next morning—a peaceful, Sabbath morn—I was musing awhile on the coming campaign when I heard a rumbling afar. On it came, nearer and nearer; all was happening as I ordered—that the white Welsh mare and another cob were to remain behind and pull the caravan over on Sunday. Coming into the gates of the yard was the white mare and cob, pulling the swaying blue caravan along with ease, and Shrimp driving it. He had got up with the dawn, walked back to Norwich, to return with all my hopes for the future in that blue, rumbling van.

A cast of sadness paleed these preparations. After three years, my good friend and groom, George, was leaving for a better place in a large stable nearby, and I had engaged a new fellow called Bob. His surname I have forgotten, but not his bright face. Older than George, and handier, he never sat in a scarlet coat. His brows were too black, his nose too long. His face, though



bright, was not a horsey face. But he was what I wanted. Quick, handy, strong, he could not only strap a horse, but live like a vagabond, and shake down anywhere. And so I parted with George. Alas! not long afterwards a horse kicked him in the stomach, which nearly finished him; and now he has a little business of his own in Norwich, cutting hair and selling tobacco and cigarettes.

Not so many days after, at about four o'clock on a perfect May morning, the van was loaded. What a lot there was to remember! Colours, white, turps, oil, copal, canvases, large and small, a painting umbrella, spare dippers—should one be lost or trodden on—and, most important, brushes in piles: beautiful, well-made brushes. All this happened long before 1914, when artists' materials were excellent—before lesser artists' colour-men were absorbed into large companies; when competition existed among them and they took great pains to please their clients. Last but not least in the packing was painting-rag—masses of it. A painter out of doors is lost if he forgets this.

At length all was ready to set out for Ringland Hills. The white Welsh mare was in the shafts of the caravan, the white pony, Augereau, on a whipple-tree at her side. Shrimp, with a yellow handkerchief round his neck, was in charge of these. Two ponies tied to the caravan; the rest, with the donkey following loose, stood ready behind, and at the rear was Bob, my new man, seated in what was called the long cart, packed with more belongings and a tent, driving one of the purchases. There was a thrill of adventure about the whole thing, and soon, with rumbling of caravan, sounds of wheels, hooves and voices, they had gone through the gates, turned right-handed and had started on their fifteen- or sixteen-miles journey to Ringland via Costessey, where they were to call and leave my personal luggage with the landlord, Mr. Lyons, at the Falcon Inn. I had given Bob strongly expressed instructions that he was not to let Shrimp drink anything on the road, and I wandered back into the house as the sounds of the procession died away in the distance.

It may have been half or three-quarters of an hour later that I suddenly remembered that such vehicles as the van and cart must have the name of their owner on their off-sides. Like a flash I seized a piece of chalk from the studio, put it in my pocket, hurried to the stables, saddled the mare and was soon riding to Swardeston Green, a short cut to the Norwich and Mulbarton road; and sure enough, I caught up with the travellers just through Swardeston village. Giving Bob the mare to hold, I wrote in chalked lettering the words "Jasper Petulengro, Swains-

thorpe, Norfolk ", on both halted vehicles, and was soon again on my way home to breakfast.

About ten o'clock I bade good-bye to Mrs. Lodes, and rode off without a care. This state of bliss lasted until I reached the Falcon. Out came Mr. Lyons, red in the face, wearing a bowler hat and a serious look of deepest concern. My happiness died out. What had happened was this:

"Your men and ponies and van arrived about mid-day, sir. Both men were drunk."

My description fails entirely unless the reader can really try to imagine the voice of that dear old ex-butler, the landlord. His nose showed the slightest crimsony tinge on a very red face, perfected by reddish-brown mutton-chop whiskers. His black bowler and dark suit gave him an air of decency and responsibility, and he took snuff, and spoke with rather an important, nasal twang.

"Good God!" said I.

"Yes, sir," said he, "and the fellow Shrimp, or whatever his name is, just as he was pulling up the van, fell off the shafts, and the front wheel stopped against his head as he lay on the ground. It was shocking, sir."

"What about Bob?" I asked, my wrath rising.

"Well, Bob was not so drunk as the other fellow," said the landlord. "Anyhow, we put Shrimp under the kitchen tap and gave him some tea, and they went off again quite all right!"

Seeing my luggage was there safely, I stayed not a second. I was off down the road to Ringland Hills as fast as I could go. Past the woods on my left, with the river on my right, I soon saw, at the foot of the gorse-covered slopes, the ponies already grazing and the caravan pulled off the road on to the grass. Bob took my mount, but Shrimp lay face down on the grass, snoring. Whilst Bob stuttered out explanations I took a running kick at Shrimp's behind as he lay there. A roar of rage, and the sodden fellow, in yellow scarf and soiled black-sleeved waistcoat, rose to his feet in tears, with blood congealed on his mouth and a front tooth knocked out.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" said I.

"Bob hit me, and knocked my tooth out."

"And—I—I—I'll h-hit him again," said Bob, who stuttered badly when he got excited.

Anyhow, it might have been worse. The van, cart and ponies were safely there, and after hearing all the cursing and blaming of each other, I had now to set out and find where we could shut the ponies in some enclosure, for, once on those hills, they could

stray anywhere. At the thatched lodge of the Park nearby I was told that the meadows alongside the road belonged to the Ringland Parish Council. I mounted again, and was soon in the distant village, where I found out the right folk and bargained for the weekly rent of the two meadows.

I wonder what those villagers thought of me? I cannot imagine. I dare not do such things now: I should be shy; but this I took in my stride. After standing drinks at the inn, I was quickly back with the key of the padlock which fastened the gate. The ponies were grazing and the van placed, whilst Bob put up his tent. Before I left them a wood-fire was blazing and they were cooking steak with onions and potatoes bought on the road. Could this happen to-day? These two—Bob and Shrimp—lived like lords for weeks at very little expense; and nobody made such tea.

When working late I used not only to see what they were preparing for supper, but I also caught a whiff of the rich, savoury smell, mingling with that of the wood fire, as I mounted and rode off to the less tasty though excellent dinner awaiting me at the Falcon.

I forgave Shrimp his drinking habits. He was a good lad, a son of the wild. He could neither read nor write, and had no need of either. The best model I ever had. I have told of Ringland Hills and how I had gone there at various stages of my former life; and here was I again, with a purpose that became easy to attain now that I had overcome the first and greatest difficulties. My headquarters were at the Falcon, with my mare to carry me to and fro to the hills and my work. Best of all, the models—men and ponies—were on the spot for as long as I wished to stay.

Knowing that following the path of duty is best for oneself and all concerned, the very next morning I was out at Ringland, the mare tethered to a line, the saddle under the waggon, and within an hour or so Shrimp was posing on the white mare amongst the yellow gorse, with Bob left behind to mend weak places in the fences of the meadows.

From then, for weeks onwards, I worked with little disturbance, free and happy on those hills. After painting awhile, the beauty of the gorse and sunlight on the ponies became a problem and a joy. Days flew by. Two or three good efforts pointed the way to a larger subject. A fifty by forty canvas, with others, were now laid in the long cart each morning, and pulled up the hills on the summit of which I was working in a sort of gravelly hollow. The white ponies stood up against the sky in sunlight,

with the distant blue Taverham country across the valley showing beneath their bellies.

A splendid subject! I revelled in painting on that sandy brow. What occasional passers-by thought of us from below never struck me. Nobody cared, and I was at peace. One of the paintings grew into a picture entitled "The Coming Storm", which was hung in the Academy after the First World War. A romantic background of tents and fair, a drove of passing horses, Shrimp riding the white mare and leading the other white pony was the principal mass of light in the picture, showing against a dark, threatening sky. It was bought on the walls of the Academy for the National Gallery of New South Wales for eight hundred and fifty pounds. One day at the Academy lately, the Duke of Gloucester told me that when he was in Sydney as Governor of Australia this was one of the pictures he chose from the Gallery to hang in his home while he was there.

## CHAPTER L

### STRAYED PONIES

I HAVE said that I was at peace—but not all the time. Things happened which broke the serenity and interfered with determination to work on and on. I give an instance. It may have been a fortnight after the start of this plan when, on a fine June morning, I rode over, to find Bob and Shrimp anxiously awaiting me, with great concern on their unshaven faces. No ponies, no white mare in the long cart.

“What’s happened?” said I.

Both began the story, Bob stuttering. The ponies had got out through a gap in the hedge and were gone. What a shock! There sat I on the mare, speechless, frustrated, wanting to start work and yet baulked in this manner.

“They got through the fence over there,” said Shrimp. “I tracked ’em up through the woods across some wheat, over to a farm two miles away. They’re all locked in a horse yard, and the farmer wouldn’t let me take them away. He found ’em in the young wheat.”

Shrimp was in his sleeve waistcoat with black pearl buttons, wearing a yellow silk scarf and tight cord trousers, and two halters were round his shoulders. No wonder the man refused to let him take the ponies until the owner came to pay damages. Shrimp looked what he was, and was part of the thing; but what on earth did I look like? I hesitated about going to see the farmer as the owner of this mixed assembly. But it was a fine day; I must and had to paint.

“Get up behind on the mare,” said I to Shrimp, “and take us to where they are.”

“Oh, damn and blast!” said I to Shrimp as we rode, Shrimp sitting behind, holding on to me.

But what a good mare! With the saddle I must have weighed twelve and a half stone, whilst Shrimp, another eight, brought our combined weights up to at least twenty. We galloped uphill, through a woodland track, even jumping a fallen tree, and out on to fields of young green corn.

“Over yonder,” said Shrimp, pointing to a distant farm and buildings.

Arriving, we found the farmer, who appeared to show no

surprise at such a queerly assorted pair on one horse. Over in the yard were all the strayed ponies; a padlock on the gate.

I explained to the farmer, who was not in the least interested in a man painting ponies on Ringland Hills. He was a dark, queer-looking fellow with black side-whiskers, and wore a bowler hat. After staring at me thoughtfully for a minute and then at the mare and then at my old flannel trousers, covered with dabs of paint, mostly gorse-yellow, he slowly said:

"They were on my corn, and nobody with them at five o'clock this morning, and I want ten shillings."

"My dear sir," said I, "how kind of you to shut them up! I might have lost them. I'm willing to pay you anything. Now I must get to work."

Here I offered the man a golden sovereign, but he only wanted ten shillings, and I paid him.

All was well. The farmer walked to the yard gate, produced the key from his pocket, unlocked the padlock, and opened the gate. Shrimp, who had brought two halters, put one on the dun pony and one on the grey mare, and, mounting the dun and leading the other, he started out, the rest scampering behind, whilst I brought up the rear and drove them along to the lane leading to the top of the hills.

In a very short space of time, though in a sweat, I was at work. This had been a considerable interruption to my effort.

There was another uproar when I lent Shrimp the little dun horse to go into Norwich to have a tooth pulled out which Bob had loosened. The dun returned that night, but without Shrimp. The fellow had been having a drinking bout, fallen off and slept under the fence!

This was more disturbing—no model. Had he known his value to me, Shrimp might have struck again and again for anything. This never entered his head, and as Bob and I were toiling to the hills with the cart and pictures, to my joy I heard a shrill whistle. Coming up the slope was Shrimp. As he joined us I looked with horror at his swollen eyes. What a sight!

"Cor," said he, "my 'ead don't 'arf ache."

"Serve ye right," said Bob.

"Don't be hard on him, Bob," said I diplomatically and with cunning, for I had been afraid Shrimp had carried out his oft-repeated threat to run away. "It was you, Bob, who loosened his tooth."

Silence. A creaking of wheels and panting of the fat, grey mare as she pulled the cart, led by Shrimp. All a dream to me now. A queer trio, unlike anything ever seen on the hills. My-

self on a respectable horse, wearing the worst of clothes: a white linen hat, flecked with paint, a coat fairly clean—at work I wore a long, holland painting coat, plastered mostly with yellow. My legs on either side of the saddle were in trousers of all colours; I believe I once sat on the palette in them. I wore old canvas shoes for comfort. Only one thing was fair to middling—my black-and-white-spotted tie.

Bob defies description. A sense of humour twinkled in his deep-set brown eyes, shaded by heavy black eyebrows meeting across the bridge of his long nose. Humour lurked at the corners of his wide mouth. His stiff black hair, his sunburnt face and arms gave him the look of a tinker. This change from groom to vagabond had been so gradual that I was unaware of it until he called at the Falcon one evening with a message. The landlord showed great concern on learning that he was Mr. Munnings' servant. I was rather staggered on seeing him in the Falcon's civilised surroundings. But he was a priceless fellow, and would and could do anything.

And so we trailed up the broken track, with blackbirds singing below and skylarks above. Three men with an outlandish purpose. Our spot reached, the canvas was soon set on a French easel. If the wind were brisk, Bob had a heavy stone on a line to hang down from the middle of the easel.

I always stood with the sunlight slanting from one side or other, if possible, the back of the easel covered with sheets of brown paper tucked in the stretcher, to prevent the sun shining through. These preparations done, work began, the lad holding a horse, and Bob keeping the flies away with a birch spray. At lunch time my packet of food was often a thick, cold pork chop, a pickled onion or two and half a small loaf. Bottled beer was in Bob's care, not Shrimp's!

If only it could all happen again! My pleasant rides to and from Ringland on horseback had to cease. Each morning, when arriving at the hills, the mare was unsaddled and tethered with a long line to an iron peg in the ground and left to graze. This served its purpose during the month of May, before the flies appeared; but after that the poor mare, having a docked tail, had no protection from the accursed pests, and so she stayed in her loose box at the Falcon, going out each night on the meadows by the river. My bicycle had been packed on the long cart, and I used the far handier and more easily-disposed-of horse. The Rover bike was stood in the shade of the caravan, and flies never worried it.

## CHAPTER LI

### CAMPAIGNING AGAINST A SEA OF TROUBLES

**I**N an old set of volumes of the work of Robert Burns I found and read a chapter called "Fragment". Burns, an artist in words, begins thus:

"As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, that 'half a word fixed upon, or near the spot, is worth a cartload of recollection'."

These words from Gray to Palgrave, quoted by Robert Burns, would cheer the souls of artists who have tried to record their own vision, their way of seeing things. If they be out-door painters, they will indeed understand Gray's message.

How many have loved and have tried to paint the English scene, and in nine cases out of ten a sketch from Nature, however slight, however quickly done—be it only a note on a pochard panel—a panel fixed on a miniature box held on the thumb—of a stream, a sky, cattle in landscape—there is something in that work gained from Nature that baffles repetition in the studio, even after many years of practice. Often do we find amongst forgotten sketches something which, in its way, lords it over its maker. It shames our efforts away from Nature:

Thine own above thyself made lord,—  
Of self-rebuke the bitterest.

A habit grew upon me which was as follows: whether painting gypsies at Epsom or in Hampshire, ponies and horses at Ringland or elsewhere, I never started a large picture until I had painted smaller canvases of thirty by twenty-five inches, or twenty-four by twenty inches. Of these, one or two might be worthy of a larger subject. I kept my belongings in a cottage or building near my painting-ground. There, on a wet day, I stretched bigger canvases and designed pale-red-and-white enlargements on them from smaller work.

Sir William Nicholson—a fine artist—told me often that it was easy to put on the paint if you knew where to put it. How true! Time is lost in endeavouring to retrieve a bad arrangement.



My morning or afternoon subject planned—whichever it happened to be—with a fifty-by-forty-inch canvas, I have sat or stood at the same place, in the same shadow of tree or fence, day by day, working out a picture passage by passage. With canvas all set, a half-bucket of water hung from the easel to steady it against a fitful breeze, palette and brushes ready; Mrs. Stevens in a huge black hat with feathers posing in the September sunlight, the top half of her against the sky, her pink blouse lit, a bright green neckerchief on her shoulders. For one moment there arises a doubt. Shall I ever do this and all the rest? I begin on the black hat and her shaded features; I put in the earrings and the dark curls, and paint the light sky around the silhouetted head. My doubts are gone. A touch of best copal varnish as I paint the face. Then the green silk neckerchief and pink blouse: "The pale cast of thought" disperses in action. Alas! those September days of painting in Hampshire; gone with the past. I will tell of these in their turn.

When I began this chapter, my intentions were to write of the troubles of open-air work.

"Look, sir," Bob would say, as I worked away on the ridge of the hill at Ringland—"look at them old clouds comin' up!"

"Oh, Bob," I groaned, "rot the clouds!"

"But they're goin' to stop us this time, sir," said he.

"Oh, hell!" was my rejoinder.

And sure enough, just when I had got into my stride, in the very spirit of the picture—doing wonders, in fact—a cold blanket of forlorn misery was closing upon me. Clouds were slowly coming in succession, not followed by spaces of promising blue, but by formations that gave no hope. Fine, slowly-moving clouds, trailing their shadows in succession on a fine day, did not hinder me. On the contrary, their shade gave me respite to see what I was doing, although I used a large painting umbrella. Bob would be right. The day changed. No artist can tell a layman of the hopeless blight that falls upon him with such a change. He is doomed, beaten; but only for the day. To the artist of experience there is a way out: he has with him his second canvas—his second string.

Always in that flat cart nearby, in the shade, lay my other canvases, among them the grey subject, already well on its way, belonging to this same spot.

"Bob, help me!"

The discarded sunny picture is laid in the cart, the other placed on the easel, and again I am at work in the fresh mood, recovering from the setback. Deep in the grey picture, I am

painting the distant belt of Taverham Woods on the skyline, seen below the bellies of the ponies standing on the ridge.

It was through a far worse defeat, a more bitter ending, that I made my large picture on that occasion at Ringland into the one now in Sydney Art Gallery, entitled "The Coming Storm". Bob had warned me; Shrimp said he knew we were going to get it. I had gone on, aware of a portent in the air—hearing far-off booming of thunder; watching the ominous, dark storm-clouds gather and slowly advance. What a background!

"Bah!" said I, "it will miss us!" Then I knew they were right. "Help me with this," I shouted.

In a minute everything was packed and covered over in the cart. And with a rattle of wheels and trotting feet, cart, ponies and all were gone. I watched them pass along the road below to the thatched lodge nearby, and out of sight.

I remained with Joe to await the coming storm. After days of oppressive heat, I welcomed the sight of it, and, sweating in every pore, walked back on the plateau to a shed by some stacks at the entrance to the lane. The effect was spectacular. The sky dark; calamitous! Anything might happen. So sultry was the air that I flung off all my clothes, put them in the shed and stood naked in the warm, pelting rain. Young—regardless of health—putting on my canvas shoes, I strode across the open to the short turf, now like a lake, and frolicked, danced and sang. My dog, Joe, followed and watched me capering in the downpour. To the pealing of thunder I sang:

No eye to watch; and no tongue to wound us—  
All earth forgot and all heaven around us.

Then, to the old "Nuts and May" tune:

When we were young the only way  
Was to finish a picture day by day;  
Now we're old and turning grey  
We polish it off in a morning,

and then marched about singing a music-hall song of the day:

I don't suppose he'll do it again  
For months and months and months.

Keeping up the refrain, I went back to the shed and, drying myself on my old flannel trousers, got dressed. Incessant, flickering lightning accompanied the volleying thunder, and across the darkened valley:

Far flashed the red artillery.



14" x 10"  
*A stone-breaker friend, Johns, drawn in Cornwall.*



*Evelyn. A sketch done in Cornwall.*

What a storm! As the rain ceased, I remembered my bicycle left leaning against a silver birch. How much handier, I thought, than a horse. With the music-hall song still on my lips—"I don't suppose he'll do it again for months and months and months"—I made for the Falcon.

And I never did do it again, and never shall. Sitting here late at night, that afternoon at Ringland seems a long way off. The wind outside in the trees moans fitfully:

I don't suppose he'll do it again  
For months—and months—and months!

Such interruptions happen to the painter of the open. Sudden and soon gone, it was a fine sight. Hence the title for my large picture, "The Coming Storm".

A more tantalising, worrying enemy is the wind. Thank God for pleasant breezes which cool the brow. Too strong a breeze irritates. It moves the canvas like an unseen, disturbing sprite. With my helpers I fought this, and many other things. "*Continuez toujours*," as Bougereau used to say in Julian's atelier, when he came on his visit to the students.

A smaller canvas was easier, but I gained in the end. The difficulty often brought its reward. "The Coming Storm" and other canvases strengthened my financial position years later, so that I could again repeat these expensive jaunts, and afford to do things which I wanted very much to do. The pictures I painted at this period were sold—many at my first Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in London in 1912.

Although she is writing of another year, I here insert a portion of my mother's diary in which she refers to my state of mind—how can an artist ever be really happy?

"Alfred has been over, he seems to be happy, at least, as happy as it is possible for him to be—he really very seldom appears quite satisfied or happy. This has been a terrible summer, except for one fortnight in the early part of July which was delightfully warm. We have had nothing but cold and wet. *August 26th*. We had twenty-four hours rain and an awful flood—the bridge broken down—all of which I have kept records."

(This was the old iron bridge crossing the river on the road between Mendham and Harleston.)

## THE STROLLING SINGER

MY finished or unfinished pictures were placed in an out-house of a round, thatched lodge at one of the far entrances to the wooded parklands of Costessey Hall. The collection grew on the white-washed walls week after week, and was looked at and cared for by an invalid friend named Heslop, who was delicate, and stayed out there in the lodge for his health. My hard work was a source of interest to him as he sat expectant at what was being brought back each day. On Sundays I used to help him into a boat and row him up the river to Attlebridge. We would be the only folk on the stream, and sometimes, with bared feet and legs, I got out and pushed the boat over the gravelly shallows, the stones grating on the keel. This way of moving, with no shaking or jarring, was peaceful to the invalid.

On this, my grand visit to the Falcon, I was accompanied by a poet friend from Queen's College, Oxford. His name was Case, a Norfolk name, and his father lived in Norwich. Case, who was writing a long epic on Norfolk, and needing inspiration, sent to his college for some of the famous Queen's October brew. One glass of it roused our senses in a flash, dispelling dull care so quickly that we laughed and laughed until the landlord came in to see what it was all about. We asked him to drink, and soon he was laughing, too! Case had the real, stunning Oxford accent, was very short-sighted, tall, and found difficulty in reading, although he scorned to be seen wearing glasses. In his pronunciation he said "Vee" for "the", thus in reciting one of his verses about a shop-girl and how she walked along "ve uvver side, ve sunside", or rather, "vee uv-vah side, vah sunside", etc., of the street, he was worth hearing.

In his company, and with other friends from Norwich on occasions, the evening parties at the Falcon were as they should be—so pleasant that we repeated them. Later my friend, Gerald Stones, joined me for a fortnight, and I used them both as models in pictures. Case and Stones often foregathered with odd company in the garden behind the Bush inn, sitting around a green, wooden table by a honeysuckle bower. My painting things were taken up there one morning for a diversion, and quite by chance, just as I was starting to work, two strolling singers

turned up. One—a tall, dark girl, brown as a berry—stood by the honeysuckle bower strumming a guitar. In a contralto voice, helped by glasses of ale, she was singing the popular song of the day: "Somewhere the sun is shining". A tranquil, carefree scene! The flow of ale, the sunlight, the balmy scent of honeysuckle so enhanced the sound of the song and guitar, that the company—men, women, children, dogs, cats and fowls—seemed to fall into a gentle reverie as the hours slipped by. This humble inn was appropriate for such doings. There was a soothing, idle, holiday atmosphere about its garden: "Far from the madding crowd". Nothing approaching such a scene ever happened at the Falcon, whose landlord was superior and aloof to wayfarers. It was at the Bush that, with a very long start, Stones and Case ran a race with a trotting pony in the street. The pony belonged to a Doctor Darrell, and was driven by an old character named John Holden, famous driver of trotters. The pony passed the runners like a train.

All good things come to a close, and by the end of July I was moving back to Swainsthorpe, as already arranged, to travel on from there to a southern corner of Norfolk, where Stones was to meet me on a certain day and be my companion for months in our old farmhouse quarters there. At that time Stones had a new and most wonderful motor-bike, and could get anywhere.

## "THE CARAVAN MOVES ON"

**I**N this far-off, remote district in a sylvan setting, too perfect to name, we had found a happy valley—an Arcadia. Can anyone in these days imagine any place where the peace of the sky above is undisturbed by the sight or sound of an aeroplane?

Yet so it was then. Pattering sound of poplars and the rustling of reeds fringing dark, still stretches of river with steely, shimmering, wind-touched surface, belonged to the valley. Sounds of many sheep and of farming belonged to the fields above.

When away from old haunts we love them more. Much as I liked Ringland, I looked forward to a change of scene in this Arcadia, and to the grand entry that I was planning to make there. I worked from the beginning of May until the middle of July at Costessey and Ringland.

At last the morning came for our departure. The caravan, loaded with pictures and belongings, drawn as before by the two white ponies, rumbled out on to the road, followed by the other ponies—the packed-up cart bringing up the rear. The expedition was ended. With myself in the lead, we left Ringland, said good-bye to the landlord at the Falcon on the way, making for our headquarters at Swainsthorpe by a cross-country road, and thus avoiding Norwich.

At Church Farm the van was unloaded, pictures placed in the studio, fresh canvases put in, rolls of unstretched canvas, more brushes, more paints, more oil and turpentine, and all things needful to the painter. Spending only one night there, we started at five next morning in the same order of march, the caravan leading. The scene is with me now. Rose-beds on the left of the front door, beach-gravel on the space in front of the house, iron railings with a wide gate that led into the yard between barns and orchard and out on to the road.

I hear the rumble of the caravan. It comes into sight from the back of the stables, the early morning sun lighting the top and the ponies' backs, the rest following, with Bob driving the dun horse in the cart behind. When they are on the way, and when I have said good-bye to old Mrs. Lodes, who says she'll miss us, and who gives us a parting blessing with the words, "Well, we dunnow when we'll be seeing ye again, but I hope ye'll come t' no



harm", I get my horse, which is waiting, saddled, in the stable, mount and trot away to pass my procession, riding about fifty yards ahead, so that folk should not think that I was in any way connected with it. By riding ahead, I was able to see there was no stopping at every inn on the way, a full thirty miles, that nothing should take place on this journey such as had happened on the route to Ringland in the spring.

And so, over the railway crossing, past the little church with a round tower, down the hill into the main Norwich and London turnpike. Here we went to the right southwards, through Newton Flotman, by the Bird in Hand at Tasburgh, and on to Long Stratton, halting twenty minutes for refreshment. On again, past Wacton Duke's Head to Dickleburgh. And behind, the rumble of the caravan and the clatter of ponies' feet. At last, after some fifteen miles, we arrived at the White Hart at Scole, the finest inn left in England. An ancient, magnificent pile, with the date "1655" on its vast and richly designed red-brick front. It is one of the few old coaching inns remaining in a state of perfection which gives us a picture of England in the day of Charles II. The mystery between now and then begins to disappear as we stand at the foot of the wide oak staircase, easy of ascent to landing after landing, with its massive posts and balustrade. When we walk in those lofty rooms above and below, contemplating their proportions, mantelpieces, solid floors and parqueted ceilings, some faint conception comes before us of what the travellers were like who came and went. I used to think of the earliest coaches that called there after the place was built, and of the tall sign with carved figures that stood across the road until the days of fast horses and lighter coaches; and although its sign has vanished, the inn remains a stately relic of the past.

But to our journey. Not long after starting from Scole an incident occurred. The dun horse in the cart suddenly began kicking violently. I rode to the rear, and saw Bob standing on the seat of the cart with the dun's heels lashing high in the air. There being a low dashboard, one of its hind feet was caught in the cart, and still it kicked. Bob, holding the reins, was well out of reach of those heels, and when the horse cleared himself the kicking stopped as suddenly as it began. The next move was to unharness the dun and fix him to the whipple-tree on the offside of the white mare in the caravan in the place of the other white pony, which we changed over into the cart, with a strong kicking-strap fastened over his quarters should he start doing the same as the dun. This spoilt the look of our procession, which, until then, had been headed by the two greys as a pair.

Making a fresh start, we travelled on, until we came to a turning on the right which led us westwards for some miles until we passed over a familiar bridge with poplars about it along the river. Poplars I loved—for I often sat at work painting the tracery of those trees against the sky. I have kept one of the canvases painted there. A hill between thick fences took us to our village, and, turning left by the flint-built church, with its pinnacled tower, we went on until there, coming along the road, his face lit up with joy, was my dear friend from Julian's in Paris, Gerald Stones. He had heard the distant rumble of the van.

What a meeting! I had come along through the southern half of Norfolk to this far-off spot with models and all my gear, and he said, as he stood there smiling under his panama hat, "My lad, you make circumstances".

The arrival at Spring Farm was all as it should be. Pigs were about the yard, fowls at the door, the household expecting us. The caravan was pulled into a pasture with elms on the left, horses and ponies taken down to the water-meadows in the valley, at one-and-sixpence a week a head. There was the old-fashioned rose-tree with its glory of pink roses all over the house and front door. The currant and gooseberry bushes, the privet fence, the garden path to the road, the old plum-trees—all the same, with its atmosphere of ease and no responsibilities.

We sat down on our old garden seat awhile, as we had sat the summer before, and where one day we had seen a swarm of bees gather and fly away until they looked like a tiny piece of gauze against the sky, and disappeared, and we wondered where the guides were leading them, for the summer before that we had been reading Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee*. Sitting there together in the afternoon sun, our backs to the red-brick wall of the house, pitted with nail-holes, we felt we were again under its spell. A profusion of pink roses around and above us, clustering in masses over windows and porch, attracted the bees and gave out sweet scents on the warm air.

Always believing in not letting opportunities slip by, I suggested to Stones that we unpack our canvases and materials in the empty parlour before tea—"Action", I said, "is the thing". Straight into the empty parlour we went, undoing packages of canvases which had been sent by rail from St. Ives. Each package was faced with thick strawboards. These were going to be put to a moral use. We were about to start writing on them texts from the family Bible, when the broad-bosomed, broad-beamed, smiling maid-of-all-work came in to say tea was ready. After tea, in idle mood, our purpose was carried out. From the

old Bible words were chosen to strengthen our purpose—to make us work. Taking a large plain strawboard, thirty by twenty-five inches, I printed in large letters, using ivory-black thinned with turps, the following well-known, never-forgotten text:

*"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."*

This done, a bad oleograph over the mantelpiece in our living-room was taken down and the text hung in its place, so that we should see it always. Stones had done another for the opposite wall, which displaced an engraving of Hagar and Ishmael.

A good text for artists:

*"And also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God."*

Two more were done for the other walls:

*"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."*

The next—for an abode of landscape painters:

*"He that observeth the wind shall not sow and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."*

Seeing these on the walls, the maid thought us a strange pair.

"And now we're going to do you some texts for your bedroom."

A board in colours was hung over her bed:

*"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."*

And another was hung opposite:

*"Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."*

Little did we dream of the lapse of virtue that was soon to overtake this Rowlandson-like Juno; that texts would be of no avail and never reach her heart; that nature would brush them aside like leaves in autumn.

But to my story. I was relating to Stones the journey from Costessey and had got to the White Hart at Scole, which led to reminiscences, for we both knew the old place. I told Stones how once, when a small boy, I had actually stayed in the village of Scole with a governess, who had taken me home with her for a holiday. She was a kind person, and, if I remember rightly, her father kept an inn called the Greyhound, farmed some land and had a large forge on the street, which, being on the main London and Norwich road, before the days of the motor-car, did a great deal of business with four anvils going. Memory is a wonderful thing, for this must have been over sixty years ago, and I see the father of the governess as if it were yesterday. He was a grey-headed man with a sallow face, and under white brows, his

dark brown eyes were bright and intelligent. He had a pendulous bottom lip and thin grey whiskers, and wore a black skull-cap and spectacles. His shirt-sleeves were rolled up his wiry brown arms, and he wore the usual black, soiled leather apron, shining from the holding between his knees of many fore and hind legs as he smote hard and fast, hammering home nails, then twisting off their ends. Smiths in those days earned their money. This forge impressed my child's mind more than the great mass of the White Hart. And I would imagine that in those days nobody thought anything of such a place, as interest in antiquities was less than it is now, because old houses and cottages stood everywhere, a part of the life of the day, whereas such reminders of the past attract folk of the present age as they stand in their solitary grandeur or simple dignity amongst the modern, bastardised and ugly cheap growth of building.



## CHAPTER LIV

### THE GIRL OR THE PAINT-BOX

**T**HROUGH August, September, into October, 1909 and 1910, Stones and I stayed in our remote retreat. When there, we did little else but paint and enjoy life. We lived near a beautiful river. At this distance from its source it was the right width from bank to bank for the landscape painter. A lane led down between high, overgrown fences to a mill.

On one side of the lane that summer there was a field of pink clover in full bloom, and bees went to and fro across it from their hives in the orchard of the farm. This mill lane curved downhill to the right; trees became fewer towards the end, where there was a gate. Here the left-hand bank and fence ended. The way went along through a narrow meadow which sloped down to the straight stream, bordered with poplars, above the mill. Its quiet-flowing current was fringed with patches of water-moss on either side. Lily leaves reflected the sunlight, and anchored upon the surface were the precious yellow lilies themselves. On such a day the sight of the flat, shining leaves and yellow blooms on the deep purple of the water made us lazier and yet lazier, but this feeling went after a bathe. With box, easel and canvas ready, there was only one thing to paint—the river. In those days this river had all its mills working. Life was there, and the water-way had its uses, making it a paradise to the artist.

The lane, when it reached the miller's house, forked, one way leading to the left through a gate to the mill itself, where on its bridge you could stand and lean over, looking down at the fish and swaying weeds in the current below, listening to the sound of the wheel. Just before reaching the miller's house, the other fork of the lane led between heavy fences and more trees, with the miller's garden on the left, and sloping fields above on the right. Becoming a grassed track, it took you on through more narrow, sloping meadows beyond, with the stream flowing parallel below between pollarded willows. Running down sharply to the river, the track led over an old wooden cart-bridge, and across the marshland, which stretched for half a mile to the sloping country and fields on the far side of the valley. Between the lines of willow and poplar you could see the tall tower of a windmill and scarlet fields of poppies shimmering in the distance. These

poppy-fields attracted us, and one day, after great preparations, we drove over to paint them. What a turn-out ours was! A white, Welsh mare—one of my models—in the shafts; she had a long mane and tail, and was peaceful, and made us feel peaceful, and she drew us in a perfect specimen of a dealer's gig, with buckled harness.

Canvases, boxes and easels were packed in, and, wearing old panama hats and painting-coats, we jogged over the bridge, through gates to a lane which led us on to a small inn, where we stopped and had glasses of beer. Afterwards, driving on to the nearest of the poppy-fields, we both sat down to paint, and found that just a field of poppies was an impossible thing to do. However, as we were making a day of it, Stones did the poppy-field, whilst I did him painting it, with the white mare and cart in waiting, and called it "The Poppy-field Painter". What a background for Stones and the patient mare! I can see her now, standing with the reins tied to the lamp-brackets, and a brilliant line of scarlet vermilion right across the picture.

It was memories of the vista looking across from above the mill-stream, with distant poppy-fields, which led me away to this story. And now I think of afternoons in a boat, taken from near the wooden bridge by the mill, with a paintable girl for company, and how we used to row down through dark-shadowed curves of deep river with the sound of poplar leaves above, pattering always like rain. Tall reeds whispering in a breeze that ruffled the river's surface in steely smudges. Shaped masses of clouds, which form on sultry days, made light and shade, and cattle and horses stood under the trees on the banks.

Now my mind is away by that river, it would be idle not to continue, and foolish not to stay my course. Alas, those days! Whether I went upon the river with a girl or a paint-box I never was happier. It may have been more perfect bliss with the former; for painting has its sorrows, in spite of its joys, as artists know only too well. I go out painting, row to my place, fasten the boat; I step ashore and look at the scene. There is the sky, the horizon, the trees, the river. My palette is set, my hat well over my eyes—I curse the flies. It is all too beautiful. Although white is the highest light on the palette, I make the artist's compromise. The hours fly in the midst of surroundings incomparable to those of any other worker. The artist in his spot—what more?

And what of the rival happiness to my painting—the girl? She is already at the mill, looking as she should, in a pink dress—pink is the colour for the river. The miller's man and I get the

boat alongside the bank. He steps into the boat and tilts it over so that the rain-water inside is easy to bale out with the tin pannikin. Then, clearing out the debris of fallen willow-leaves, he places the stern, cushions and the oars. Wide, parallel lines break the reflections as ripples from the boat widen and spread across the mill-pool, and at last we are seated and off on our journey. Would we be young again? is a question often asked. Yes, a thousand times; but oh, to know then what we know now!

The rival to painting—the girl—sits with the tiller-cords in her laps. I am rowing. She looks ahead from under a wide straw hat, light from the ripples reflected up into her face. Sun-light falls on the shady hat and pink dress; and the river in the shadows, with glitter on the lily-leaves and water-moss, is the background behind her.

There are always things to paint when we leave our paint-boxes at home. There sits the model; the discarded box, brushes and easel should be with us too.

The September afternoon draws to its close. Before the burning rim of the sun sinks behind the wood on the hill, its last beam strikes across the meadows, lighting the stems of ash and willow. Clouds of gnats dance above the calm surface of the water, where rising fish make circles which spread and die away. The sun has gone; the air is cooler—and, as we return, the prow of the boat cleaves through dark reflections beneath overhanging trees. The after-glow spreads upwards and fades; mists are rising; delicate traceries of willow-leaves are patterned against the light; late warblers sing in the reeds as we pass along the mill-stream to the sound of dipping oar and moving rowlocks. Tranquil hours have passed, and sure enough there is ahead of us the pale, ghost-like, whitened form of the miller's man, who stands waiting for his craft to return. As he holds the boat, and I step ashore, turning to give her a helping hand, I see a low-toned, pale-pink figure stepping across the thwarts against a background of liquid gold, striped and barred with long, dark, moving lines of reflections—a picture momentarily seen, and never forgotten.

## THE POLICE AFTER SHRIMP

THE Sandpit pictures I have written of—the larger, now hanging in Norwich Art Gallery, and two sold at the Academy within recent years—were painted in a sandpit at this farm in Arcadia. They were kept in a barn near the pit, and day by day during that hot summer the large six-foot canvas or the others were fixed in the same place, and the ponies held there. I have told how the patient Augereau paid his keep and mine a thousandfold.

When painting figures out of doors I try to place myself in an obscure spot, where alone I can concentrate on the subject before me, undisturbed and out of sight. One day, thinking myself completely hidden behind the stackyard at Spring Farm, I became totally absorbed in the problem of painting Shrimp's crafty face as he posed on the white mare. In the midst of this striving to achieve the impossible, forgetful and entirely oblivious to all else, I was rudely awakened by the feeling that someone was about. Looking round, I saw two sinister figures standing behind me. One was an Inspector of Police, wearing the distinguishing cap with a shiny peak; the other an ordinary village copper. Half-dazed with frustrated endeavour, I stood glaring at these men who had interrupted me in my secret struggles.

What on earth could this mean? Was it a dream? From youth I always had a fear of policemen, and this visitation was all wrong. Resenting the intrusion, rattled by the efforts of painting a difficult problem, I stood staring angrily at these intruders who had appeared at the moment when I had determined to do or die. For their part, they did not seem surprised at the sight before them: of a man in a coat covered in paint, trying to paint a gypsy fellow on a white mare. I stood by the canvas, holding two brushes in my mouth, the palette and more brushes in my left hand, whilst in my right I held a small, a particular, square sable. With this brush I was just putting on the master stroke when the interruption happened.

"Well, what is it?" I asked.

"We want to know if the man here on the white horse is Fountain Page," said the Inspector, looking hard at Shrimp's countenance, steeped in cunning and roguery.



"Is your name Fountain Page?" said the Inspector to Shrimp.

"Yis," said Shrimp.

I stood there thinking, "What a name!" I did not know the fellow had a name.

"We've come with a summons for this man to appear in court for using bad language, and for assault at Aldborough Fair, Norfolk.

Sure enough, this was no dream. I stood speechless, my thoughts working fast. No model! No Shrimp! All would be finished! Bob was no good—he looked like nothing; there was only Shrimp, and I must keep him or shut up shop.

"Is he actually to go now?" I asked.

"Yes," said the Inspector. "Unless you are ready to pay the fine."

What a relief!! The nightmare of Shrimple days disappeared.

"What will the fine be?" said I, not caring if it was ten, fifteen, twenty pounds—a hundred!

"Fifty shillings," said the Inspector, his demeanour unaltered, unruffled, even at the sight of me, my picture, or its problems.

Could such things be? thought I, trying not to show my surprise.

"Can I pay it now?" I asked the kind man.

"Certainly, sir," said he.

I always kept money in my pocket on these expeditions. Besides, what was money? I sorted out the amount and handed it to the Inspector, who then, to show me his authority, read out a paper, or whatever it was, complete in detail. It told of Fountain Page's disorderly conduct at this fair in Norfolk, and all the rest of it.

"Do you hear all this?" said I to the villain, who still sat on the dozing mare.

"Yis," said Shrimp, looking down his nose.

"And I hope he'll not be doing it again," said the Inspector, adding, "He's lucky, having a gentleman to pay for him."

I gave the man a generous amount for himself and the constable to get a drink, with many grateful thanks and handshakings.

After this shock—this stoppage—there was nothing else to do but to turn straight to my canvas and get back to the passage in Fountain Page's countenance with which I was battling before the interruption occurred. It had been a punishing morning. For a moment I thought all was lost, but now painting seemed child's play to what might have happened. There sat the figure on whom my hopes were centred.

And this was only one of his many deeds of violence. But,

whatever he did, I could not afford to lose him then, and so I again took that brush—a small square sable—with which I was trying to paint the reflected light under the brows shadowed by the large peak of his cap before the blow fell. There sat Shrimp, motionless in the August sunlight, the leaves rustling, soft clouds floating overhead, a black Minorca cockerel with a large red comb scratching in the straw and calling to his clucking wives.

It may be that I harp too long and often on memories of these painting outings, but I find they have marked my course from year to year. A valley, with meadows by the river for the horses and ponies, was an ideal painting-ground; an open-air studio. Such slight interruptions as the police visit caused no more disturbance than a pebble dropped in a still pool; and how still were the pools in the river on August days! How pleasant the sound of the mill!

In that secluded spot, far from any road or by-way—seen only by a mill-hand or farm-worker—I painted in isolated abandonment. Every artist has a favourite painting of his own. Although it may be sold and gone long ago, he still clings to the memory of it as being the happiest and best arrangement he ever contrived on canvas. My favourite picture, "A Summer Afternoon", was painted there—a picture of dappled sunlight and shadow on a group of horses, ponies and a lad, by a fence under an overhanging tree. With two or three helpers to keep off the flies, the animals stood there each day for weeks when the sun shone. I keep that shady spot in mind, recalling how it once became a quagmire after a storm of rain. Where the picture may be now I do not know. A collector, of whom more anon, bought it and sold it with others for double the amount he had given me.

Having my own models gave me endless themes. The mere sight of the ponies, coming or going, or different placing of groups gave me fresh pictures. Like a game of chess, there was no end to it.

In the spring preceding that Arcadian summer I had seen in Munich an exhibition of work by German artists of the day. The virility of some of the large open-air paintings was staggering. My good friend, Shaw Tomkins of Caley's, who had taken me on this journey, laughed and laughed again at seeing me non-plussed—staring at work far beyond anything of its kind I had ever seen, and which, for me, spelt the truth and spurred me on to fresh efforts.

A picture by Zugel, a painter of horses, sheep and cattle, started me thinking. It was of a peasant washing his pair of

yoked, black-and-white cattle in the shallows of a wide stream; a large, vigorous sketch, done on the spot. This brilliant piece of work remained in my mind, maturing later when by this river.

Zugel was also a sculptor and a famous anatomist. I purchased three wonderful anatomical casts from his work—a horse, a cow and a hound. I still have them, and often set the cast of the horse out in the sun near me when I am painting a horse in action. It seems unbelievable that all this fine movement at Munich went under later, and gave way to the most blatant, foolish and fantastic ultra-modern art.

On grey days my subject was by the shallow edge of the mill-stream, where farm-horses watered. Seeing the ponies there, drinking, started me off afresh. Not satisfied with day work, I began a large evening picture, the sun setting almost opposite. This should have been a work of importance. The water bright gold, with long, striped reflections; the white ponies mauve against the gold, the others in darker mass. Some years later, my first evening picture done there went to Canada for five hundred guineas.

The grey-weather subject I prepared for was "The Ford"—grey water and dark reflections broken by lines of the current. Again what a subject! Those models never ceased making motifs. Standing on rising ground, looking down on the leading ponies coming out of the water, I spaced the design—cutting out the sky—using the distant country for the top portion of the picture. Ponies, water, reflections, filled the rest of the space. I still possess those large five-foot studies. Looking at them now brings back the scene afresh. I hear myself shouting, "Hi! wake that dun horse; shove his head up!" or, to a boy with a pole, "Keep the water moving."

I wrote of working in isolated, peaceful abandonment. This is true. But one forgets bad happenings. A grey ceiling of cloud—calm, serene—all was well. Then that ceiling would begin to break—silvery fissures appeared, the sun shone! Who is to describe the misery of seeing such complete, relentless transformation of everything? Poor, foolish painter! put your picture away. Though your mind be saturated with it, tear it out by the roots. Take up another canvas rather than give way to despair. But the wrench still hurts. It was comforting to think that when the change came my energies and sight were again restored by a sunlit subject to fall back on.

Moving down lower and standing with my back to the river—looking into the light—the sun high above, I saw what would

have given new joy to any despairing artist: the beautiful white mare standing with others on the top of the grass bank; the sky behind them spangled with thin patterns of drooping sprays of foliage and fence. This was done on a china-clay canvas, fifty by forty inches. "A Romany Boy" it was called. Hung on the line at the Academy, 1911, it was bought for the National Gallery of New Zealand.



24" x 20"  
*"A troop with a corporal, all in full marching order, was sent out to a quiet road."*  
 See page 304.



*French sentry seated on the trunk of the largest oak in the Forest of Dreux. See page 314.*



"Smiling sadly, each signed his rude signature below." Drawn February 3rd, 1918. See page 305.

MORE DELINQUENCIES OF  
FOUNTAIN PAGE

SHRIMP, or Fountain Page—Page was really his proper name—was a good model, but an unruly and lawless fellow. This is true; my easy work suited him; he was well lodged in the caravan, and well fed from the farm kitchen. Before I tell of further trouble I will explain his romantic Christian name—the only Christian part of him. When the police officer read out these words—Fountain Page—I gazed in wonder at Shrimp, and afterwards, when meeting with Drake, who now had joined us with more horses and ponies, I asked him how the name of Fountain came in.

“Worl,” said Drake, after rolling his flinty, fishy-looking, blue eyes in their swollen lids, rubbing his chin, with a day’s growth, and then feeling and straightening his black silk neckerchief—“worl,” said he again, as he stuck his two hands into his two pockets let into the front of his tight, black trousers, “it’s like this, Mr. Munnin’s, ye see. Shrimp was brought up any’ow. I s’pus, as his parents were livin’ somewhere round the parish o’ Narford, ’is name was took from the Fountaines o’ Narford Hall”!

Late one night, or early morning—it may have been one o’clock, or even two—I was returning from a farmhouse party, where there were three pretty daughters, and one had played the piano. We had been singing after supper—a proper supper it was, too. On reaching the little gate at Spring Farm, which opened through the privet fence from the road, as I walked up the path between the gooseberry bushes, I heard a row going on inside the house. What an hour! And what sounds of wrath and unavailing groans! I hesitated and listened. Somebody threatened to do all sorts of things. As I opened the front door I beheld the grey, woollen worsted socks of the old man on the landing—the stair led straight up from the front door—and now, coming down the first steps, those grey socks were followed by a full-length white nightgown, worn by the head of the house. Next came the grey-whiskered, ancient face, lit by the candle he carried in his large, bony hand. Seeing me, his wrath turned to fury.

“A nice lot you’ve brought to my house, Mr. Munnin’s!”

“But what on earth is the matter?” I asked. Was this going

to be the end of all my untold efforts? Always my work came first. "What is it all about?" I asked again.

"Wot is it indeed!" shouted the old man.

"Wot is it?" repeated the son at the top of the stair, descending behind his father. "Here's wot it is!"

Then the older man took up the story, looking like a figure out of the Old Testament by Rembrandt. His wide, staring eyes shining in the candlelight, he continued thus:

"By chance Henry happened to be awake and heard voices. He got up, opened the winder. Someone was about. They were in the barn. Then he looked in the maid's room, and the hussy's bed was empty. Out he went to the barn and caught the two on 'em."

"Yes," roared Henry, coming down into the hall, "I caught her, but that b——r Shrimp—I lost him. But, by God, I'll have him! I've bin round the stacks and buildings, but he's gone. I'll get him, though, and give him what he 'on't forgit."

Again the loss of Shrimp was uppermost in my mind. Who cared what the girl was after, or what happened, so long as I finished my work and regained peace of mind? The father and son both swore they would turn Shrimp, horses, ponies and myself off the premises. Thank God, Drake was away on a journey. Upstairs I could hear the unfortunate maid-of-all-work weeping; but soon the sounds died down, and all was silent as the grave.

In bed my thoughts went on and on. Without Shrimp all was ended—finished—until at last the effects of wine on home-brewed beer, taken at the farm-house party, brought me repose.

The next morning, Sunday, the sun shone; bees were humming drowsily, as they had done all the days before; pink roses shed petals from the front of the house, clustering around the open window of the downstairs room. Sunlight played through the pink petals. Chickens in the neglected garden were seeking insects beneath the gooseberry bushes. I had disturbed two of these on the table picking at my plate of porridge when I came down. Had this rumpus really happened? For no sounds of violent talk came through the intervening door to the kitchen as I sat alone, longing for Gerald Stones, who was away playing in a tennis tournament for the week-end. Then the door opened; the offending wench walked in with the teapot, smiling and bright as ever, fat and comfortable, a clean apron for Sunday.

"Well," said I, "what's all the row about last night?"

"Lor', Mr. Munnin's," said she, "that worn't anything. After all, it's only nature!"



"Nature," said I, "well, well."

I thought of those texts from Proverbs which we had put up on the walls of her bedroom.

She had scarcely gone out of the door when I was aware of a movement by the overhanging roses at the window. I turned to look, and behold, there was the cunning countenance of Shrimp, a pink flower stuck in his cap, a Woodbine in his lips, a derisive look in his eye.

"You young so and so! you'll get us kicked out of this, and all my work will be wasted."

"Garn," said he, with a scornful leer. "Everything'll be orlright. That'll all pass over."

Then he recounted his story of Henry's arrival at the barn, the door bursting open, the fleeing girl in her chemise caught and taken into the house, and his own hasty flight. He told me how Henry was soon out again beating the ditches, searching the shed and buildings.

"Whilst," said Shrimp, "I squatted out of sight in a ditch and got stung all over wi' nettles."

He could hear Henry cursing and swearing that he would do for him if he got him, and now here he was, fully dressed, wearing his yellow silk handkerchief, regardless of consequences, and not caring for anyone. Assuring me all was well, and that he would soon be sitting in the kitchen again, he sauntered off and disappeared. And so it was; all were taking a quiet cup of tea later in the day—Shrimp in his usual seat—as if nothing at all had happened.

Some weeks after that a worse and more tragic blow fell. Drake was back, and came to see me at breakfast, and brought news that darkened the bright morning. Our old white Welsh mare had broken her fetlock in a hole on a wooden bridge crossing a marsh dyke.

"She stands there, sir," said Drake, "and can't put her foot to the ground."

"Send Shrimp for the veterinary at once," said I, and soon the vet. came and saw the mare, and shot her.

This was the only time I had seen Shrimp in tears of sorrow. In rage he shed them, but these were real tears of grief, and it took him a great while to forget that kindly, useful creature. He had sat through many blissful hours of idleness on her broad white back. The seat and side of his cord trousers were covered with her white hairs.

My work had far advanced in pictures in which the white mare appeared. I resigned myself to the loss. As the season passed, and

harvest ended, October drew near and was on us; yet Stones and I stayed, in spite of rain and wind. We hated to leave. At last I was left alone. Stones had gone; Drake's caravan, too; only Shrimp was left; and on a sudden I decided to depart and to make a noble gesture. To pay Shrimp each week would have been fatal; therefore I kept back money for him. My gesture was to give him the dun horse, which now was more or less tractable, with harness and caravan.

Before handing the vehicle over, I sent it, as my property, with the pictures inside, on its last journey. The white mare being in Paradise, the dubious dun and Augereau were harnessed to the caravan. Bob was in charge, and Shrimp sworn to sobriety by the promise of the dun, caravan and money due to him, they made a safe journey to Swainsthorpe, returning in three days—to my surprise. All had gone well.

In order to pursue a theme, I planned a month at my far-off Mendham home. My mother wrote: "The Grays are back at the Lion for the winter". A message meaning so much. She wanted me to stay. I would give her the white pony—Augereau, the faithful—for her four-wheeler! The final clearance was made by presenting Shrimp with the dun-coloured horse, the caravan and money. Before he left I painted on its side in white lettering: Fountain Page, Norwich.

On a late autumn morning, with an awful feeling that everything had come to an end, I stood out in the road, heavy-hearted, gloomy and depressed, listening to the last distant rumblings of the departing caravan, with Shrimp in proud possession. He had never owned a thing in his life before. What a fool I was!

The very next morning, at a loose end, I sat at breakfast thinking of the summer that had flown. As I watched the late-blooming roses about the window, a face appeared. It was not Shrimp's face this time. It was the dark, swarthy face of one called Moocher, who lived away on a nearby green, and dealt in horses, ponies, pigs, fowls and every kind of thing.

"What is it, Moocher?" said I.

"Well, sir——" said he, "you don't 'appen to be wantin' that little owd dun-coloured hoss back, do ye?"

"What's this, Moocher?" I began.

"Well, sir—if you 'aven't done all ye want with 'im, I've got 'im, and can lend 'im to you for a while."

This was astounding news to hear, and so soon after the horse's departure.

"What's happened?" I asked.

"Well, is it true you give Shrimp the caravan and hoss?"

"Of course, quite true," said I.

"Then I'll tell you what's 'appened," said the swarthy fellow, with a smile. "Yisterday mornin' I was down at the pub on the green, and along came this fellow of yours, Shrimp, with caravan and all, and pulls up. Now, thinks I, 'as Mr. Munnin's given 'im the waggon, or 'as Shrimp taken 'isself off with it? He told me you had given 'im the hoss and van. Any'ow, sir, if ye want ter know, the dun hoss is on the green with mine, and th' owd van's outside my 'ouse with the kids playin' in it."

"How did that happen?" I asked.

"Worl, you must know what Shrimp is like when 'e starts. I stood 'im a pint, and another one or two, and we 'ad a deal. I chopped a little owd pony and cart and a bit o' money for 'is van and hoss, and sent 'im off to Norwich. So if you do want the hoss, let me know."

This was tempting—but October was out; Bob, restless, had gone to Swainsthorpe by rail. I refused the offer and hardened my heart. Had it happened to-day, the dun horse should have come back to my own premises and meadows. My heart is softer now than then. I was like any ordinary, natural man who had a horse or horses in the days of horses, when they were plentiful as sheep. Besides, I could not collect and keep all the horses and ponies I used as models. This, I have to state sorrowfully, was my last campaign of painting in that remote and nameless region.

I journeyed to my old home at Mendham, where the groom had charge of my mare. Canvases and belongings had gone; all was done and over.

## THE PRESIDENT'S FATHER

WITH autumn and the departure of Shrimp and his van, the episode in Arcadia was ended. Although I had several studies of crossing the ford, my purpose to paint the picture was only beginning. In response to letters from my mother asking me to come and stay, to let her put me up, saying that the Grays were back at the Lion, I sent her word I was coming.

Painting was resumed by another river, the Waveney. Praying for grey weather, and getting it in long spells, I stood, as in my last spot, on rising ground, behind the mill, looking down at a similar angle on ponies, grey water and reflections. This picture was hung, but skied, in 1911. Years afterwards I cut off the top, in which I had shown the sky. Hours spent on these two large canvases were not unrewarded. Each day my work went on to the ceaseless, busy hum of the mill, and the sound of the water as it eddied and swirled from underneath the dark, cavernous space where the large water-wheel turned, sending out a delicious, pungent smell, the very essence of the river's life.

The ponies, through long habit, would take their own places on the slope from the shallow water and stand there, often having to be wakened from pony slumbers, overcome by the continual drowsy sounds of mill and water. Those farther back in the stream were held by Gray the younger, wearing gum boots.

Sowter, the engine-driver, would come out to see how I was getting on.

"For God's sake, don't stand looking at what I'm doing," I snapped out.

"Garn," said Sowter, with derision. "What's the sense of getting riled because ye can't dew it?"

He was right—I couldn't "dew it", although I tried. Both large canvases of "The Ford" are still here as reminders of those far-off days which grew colder and colder. It is useless to write about cold hands and feet, sitting in a warm room with a record summer of drought just over. Not until I stood, trying to draw, by the paddock rails at Hurst Park not long ago in December, feeling a chill, relentless draught, did I remember how suffering

begins with watering eyes, followed by the accursed dripping of a snuffling nose and freezing fingers and feet, gloves being useless to paint or draw in. That spiteful wind, coming across the paddock at Hurst Park, brought back all the petty sufferings and miseries of outdoor painting in winter. No writing can express those feelings of cold as I carried my large canvas back each afternoon at four-thirty to stand it face to the wall in the kitchen. My mother had written that her life was dull at home with no company in the evenings. Here is an extract from her diary fitting in with that time :

“ This is Easter—a long gap in my journal shows a happier time. Alfred has been with us part of the winter, and in spite of his erratic ways and hasty temper it has been a better time than last Spring. I have had no time to be dull or lonely. Oh, the blessedness of being able to work! I have so many worries I cannot rest long except I have a book to divert my thoughts. April is near, and now is a critical time for us. Every year there has been this periodical anxiety over the Balance Sheet.”

I enlivened her life with a will! To add to the liveliness, I invited a sculptor friend from St. John's Wood, named Whitney-Smith, who, like me, was young and full of work in those days. He brought his clay and modelling tools and stand, which Gray carted from the station, and soon he was doing a bust of my father. This was not shown at the Academy until the year I became President, and Smith was wondering what to call it. He suggested “ The President's Father ”. One morning, sitting in the secretary's room, I ventured in artless confidence to ask Sir Walter Lamb, the secretary, what he thought of such a title.

“ Pooh ! ” said he in a cynical mood, “ no good at all—thousands of people come here and have never heard of, or even know, there is a President.”

With no attempt at pride on my part, I venture to think, as I sit here and write, that since the Chantrey Bequest Exhibition and the Academy Banquet of 1949 there are now, on the contrary, many people who do know that there is a President!

To continue my story. Whilst Smith got on with the bust of John Munnings, I was painting various pictures, with the large and ambitious masterpiece by the river reserved for grey days. I had discovered in the past what a figure Gray made in a scarlet coat on a horse. Again he played the part for me when St. Martin's Summer blazed out and the sun shone on the scarlet coat and yellow autumn trees. As Gray sat and blew his horn for me :

“ Shall I blow agin? ” he'd say.

"Yes, for God's sake, blow!" said I.

I still have the unfinished forty-by-thirty canvas. Gray sat on a wooden horse, his head against the sky, blowing his horn. The low November sun lit up his face.

"For God's sake, blow!" said I, anxious to get the light—the modelling.

Alas! these memories. All kinds of foliage—yellow, gold, russet—were in the background.

With small, square sables, I painted that unsurpassable countenance. Gray could have played the part of parson or lawyer equally well. When no longer a huntsman—out of his spruce get-up—he was just a wise old tinker; looking wiser still wearing horn-rimmed spectacles as he read *The East Anglian Daily Times*. A true philosopher. A maker of mats, conjured into shape from rushes that filled the shallows of the river with masses of dark green. He also made baskets, mended boots, soldered kettles and pans, and knew High Suffolk. The unfinished canvas of him, when I cleaned it for use in this book, made me sad. Living well on—long after I had left that country—he died in his old caravan at a ripe age, leaving Charlotte alone, for the son had already passed on. I think of Thomas Moore's song:

Oft in the stillly night  
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,  
Fond mem'ry brings the light  
Of other days around me.

Then it goes on:

When I remember all the friends so linked together  
I've seen around me fall like leaves in wintry weather, etc.

This mood must be shaken off. A water-colour, "The Gap", was painted at the time. Fred, the son, posed in scarlet for the figure on the horse, creeping through the gap. Published as a colour print, the picture hangs in many houses. In the following spring, with others, it was exhibited at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, and bought by the late Sir William Waterlow, who, I believe, published it, and after his death the picture, or its copyright, was purchased by another publishing firm, who did a most excellent collotype reproduction of it, and its sale continues.

I have told of the indefatigable sculptor working on my father's bust in the gig-house. How the model posed throughout those long sittings I never understood! This work started in autumn, with the evenings drawing in, darkness fell before five o'clock, and at night, after high teas of blessed memory

put on the table by my mother, sittings began again in the gig-house with shut doors. My friend worked by the intense, blinding light of two oil flare-lamps which the travelling fraternity used before the days of electricity to illuminate their steam-horses, their side-shows, their rifle-ranges, swing-boats, coconut shies, and such like—a grand light for modelling.

Through the persuasion and help of the sculptor, who made me a stand and an armature—little knowing what I was doing—I began a statuette of the white pony, Augereau, which on most days posed for hours for “The Ford” picture. This did not trouble the pony, for he ate hay as he posed. I did the statuette in clay, with the pony in the same action as he appeared in the picture. Night after night Smith modelled my father, whilst I modelled the pony.

In addition to the bust, Smith made two little statuettes, as a pair, which were afterwards cast in bronze, of old Gray and his wife, Charlotte. Gray had to pose in a most difficult position. Dressed and appearing as an ancient huntsman, he stood with most of his weight on the left foot, the right one being slightly forward. With head thrown well back, he was draining a pint pot of beer, but, for all his patience, poor Gray at last got to dread those long hours, trying to keep the difficult position. The son stood by, holding up his father's right arm as he posed in the act of emptying the last drop out of the tankard! During these happenings a large, basket-covered stone jar of ale from the Red Lion stood in the gig-house, and it was emptied each night.

The other little statuette—that of Charlotte—was, like Gray's, a perfect piece of characterisation. It is the living image of old Charlotte, and Gray used to make some scathing remarks to her about it:

“Well, woman,” he would say, “if that bain't like you, then nothin' is—now ye know what ye look like.”

With the completion of the bust and the statuettes of the two Grays and my white pony, the work was not at an end; yet more troubles were in store, for Smith had arranged for them to be cast into plaster-of-paris before taking them to London. An expert caster, whose name I have forgotten, came from London. Had this expert been only expert at his trade, all would have been well, but upon his arrival my mother had suspicions at the first glance. I had seen this fellow at work in Smith's studio in St. John's Wood and had known that he had an inclination to drink. Here, in this quiet Suffolk scene, his dissipated look and bleary eyes gave even Smith, who was used to him, a shock. In the setting of a grimy London studio, coming out of grimy streets,

with his pale face and red nose, the man did not look so incongruous as when he appeared in country surroundings. He wore a shabby bowler, a grease-spotted black coat and waistcoat, old striped trousers, out of shape at the knee, with concertina creases at the ankles, a soiled collar and black tie. His black, walrus moustache drooped over a receding chin, and "Oh ho! Oh ho! his nose doth show"—that nose gave him away. No wonder my mother distrusted his looks! For at least a fortnight he slept in one of the top rooms, and was fed in the house, but alas! the Red Lion was only half a mile away across the fields, and the caster soon found his way there. After an evening bout he was in no fit state for work the following day; but all things come to an end, and the fellow, in spite of his habits, proved a master of his job. With dust and mess filling the gig-house, the bust and statuettes were successfully cast, Smith and the caster travelling back to London with them.

Our sculptor was gone. My father missed those long sittings, to which he had been getting so used. Gray and Charlotte not only missed Whitney-Smith, they missed his extra pay, and often talked of him as being "a very nice gentleman".

Only once did he give occasion to shake my mother's belief in him. He and I had driven out one late afternoon, with the white pony and yellow gig, to look at an old piece of furniture in somebody's house. We had stayed late, and on the way home called to see a good-looking barmaid at an inn called the Dove. Somewhere about midnight, as we came driving home down the lane, and when we had almost reached the house, I said to my friend, "Come on, Ted, let's sing," and passing the windows to the strains of "Landlord, fill the flowing bowl"—our favourite air—we drove down to the stable yard, put the pony up, turned indoors, and went to bed. The next morning, my mother, who loved to find fault now and again, if given the chance, remarked that it seemed a nice way to arrive home in the middle of the night, singing and bawling as we drove past the house. I laid the whole blame on Whitney-Smith: he assured my mother that it was entirely through me that we sang as we drove down the yard. We certainly did feel rather dull and spiritless when Smith and his caster departed.



## APPRECIATION OF JOE

WE lost another friend during that winter at Mendham. My dog, Joe, never left me, unless it was to go out with Friday, following my mother in her pony carriage at the rate of two and a half to four miles an hour. As I worked on "The Ford" he always expected me to throw something in the river for him to retrieve, or he would lie on a sack inside the engine-room door. His life suddenly came to an untimely end, and I was left utterly broken-hearted. We all were. He had gone out, as usual, with my mother on a journey to Harleston, and joining in a fight with other curs in the High Street, was run over and killed by a butcher's cart. Butcher-carts were always driven at what we then thought a terribly reckless speed; and thus ended poor Joe's life. My mother, in tears, brought him home, stiff and stark. Fred Gray, who long ago, when I lived in Shearing's Farm, Mendham, had gone to fetch him for me after having bought him from a man near Bungay, dug his grave in tears, and old Gray and I were the mourners. The misery we suffered—that I suffered—on that afternoon was deep enough, and the memory of that scene at the end of the lawn by the old boathouse brings tears again. How often had Joe and I stepped into the boat in that old boathouse, either to go off sailing or painting! How he loved a boat and the river! He was the most faithful, queer little companion in the world, and he was gone! Another Welsh terrier, from Wales, called Taffy, took his place; but he was not the same, alas!

I would not call this an obituary notice, but rather an appreciation. I have told of those autumn and winter afternoon rides, when Joe accompanied me. During the day he was about the stables after rats, or around the hedges hoping to catch a rabbit, and if the weather was inclement, he lay on a rug near the stove in my studio. As the afternoon drew on to half-past three, or as late as four o'clock, Joe would show signs of bottled-up impatience. He sometimes gave that little whine, such as terriers make, and, shaking all over, he suddenly came to life as he saw his master lay down palette and brushes, take off the old painting-coat, and put on his hat. Soon he was dashing round to the stables, and immediately I was mounted he began his usual foolish

trick of jumping up and trying to bite the mare's nose as she trotted out of the yard. This happened once too often, for as we were going into the road there was a frightful yelp; the mare had trodden on Joe's forefoot. This was a finisher for Joe. He was unable to accompany me for days. The vet was sent for to dress his foot, but next day Joe pulled off the bandage and was licking the crushed paw. Limping on three legs, he would go to the stables and see me off. Hour after hour he used to lie in his chair, patiently licking the wounded paw until it healed.

On these rides Joe always ran at least twenty yards ahead. One late winter afternoon we met the staghounds returning from hunting. There stood Joe, like a diminutive statue on three legs, in the middle of the road, his short tail erect, quivering, whilst the whole pack, with bristles raised, gathered round him. Their deep rumbling growls may have disconcerted this small hero, but he did not show the least sign of fear. At a word and the crack of whips from the hunt servants, the hounds passed on, my friend, Jack Cooke, the Master, saying, "Turn your horse round and ride with us"—which I did. After we had ridden a mile or two, Cooke relating the doings of the day, he looked forward and said, "What do you think of our leading hound?" and there at the head of the pack was my small dog, trotting along in the middle of the road with the hounds in his wake, as though he had done this sort of thing all his life!

Whilst he was with me at Shearing's Farm I did not like sleeping in the room at the end of that ancient farmhouse without Joe, because I am sure it was haunted.

I forget how long I had this dog, but through many and many a long winter evening he was my sole companion, each of us occupying an armchair on either side of the hearth.

Other dogs should come into this picture—hounds. I walked hound puppies at Swainsthorpe. Mrs. Lodes looked after the dairy at the end of the house, and the puppies thrived on gallons of milk. A strange and unusual find in a book brought me at once in touch with Tempest, a beautiful bitch. When looking through a red volume by Theodore Cook—*Eclipse and O'Kelly*, 1907—I came upon a large paw-mark on a page. Written against it by myself in pencil was: "This is Tempest's pad mark, July 13th, 1907"! Reading it with queer feelings, I pictured her, full-grown, graceful, coming along the passage from my room, carrying in her mouth a whole cold shoulder of mutton taken from my table.

"Oh, Tempest!" I said.

There she stood looking at me with those lustrous eyes, wagging

her tail—or stern, to be correct. I took the mutton from her and punished her—it was the only thing I could do, as all three puppies went in and out as they liked. The three were Tempest, Traveller and Trumpeter. Tempest won a first prize—a silver teapot—at the Puppy Show. Many a winter afternoon on horseback have I hunted hares on the farm with these three and Joe and a collie. They gave most wonderful tongue, but we never caught a hare. Until I came across that mark on the page, these young hounds and their doings had passed out of my mind. On an earlier page I have told of losing the sight of an eye when lifting a heavy hound puppy over a hurdle, causing a thorn-spray to rebound. The accident had happened to me seven years before in this same neighbourhood at Mulbarton, and the hound puppy was walked on the farm where I was staying.

## HUNTING FRIENDS IN THE BAR

THOUGH more than forty years have elapsed since the visits to Norwich from Swainsthorpe, either on horseback or by train, there are certain Saturdays the memory of which may never be effaced or forgotten. Saturday was market day in Norwich. Recollections—not yet obliterated—half-forgotten faces, come back as I write, and slowly, through a blue haze of smoke, a scene grows of that snuggery—that cosy bar—where on most Saturdays after five o'clock a small company gathered, drawn together by a common love of the chase.

Behind the bar was the landlord himself. Twelve to fifteen men who made that bar a place of call—it was known as the Good-bye House—sat side by side on the low, leather-covered settle occupying three sides of the room; and here, if it were winter, they discussed the run of the week with the staghounds. The harriers didn't count. The West Norfolk were far away. Mr. Low, the father of the group, always sat in the same corner, and next him was John Cooke, the best horseman in Norfolk, a man who spoke his mind and ruled his field. He smoked his briar pipes until only a hole was left in the centre of the bowl large enough to hold a pea.

On the other side of the vet. sat George Gowing, senior—known as "Snap-eye" because he blinked his eyes—Secretary to the staghounds. There were three of his brothers: Frank, who wore a silk hat out hunting; Charles; and Ted. Stephen Sutton of Rackheath sat next; with blue eyes, short brown whiskers, full colour and a good nose, he had retained bachelorhood at past middle age, and was the picture of safe contentment. His farmer neighbour, Sam Kidman, with a large moustache and a merry eye, a tall, weighty fellow, reckless over a big place and often in ditches, sat next. Then a farm pupil of Ted Gowing's, who rode in point-to-points. Harry Low, the partner son of his father, the vet. A superior gentleman farmer, Mr. Cross. A quiet, kindly fellow, Billy Vincent, a bachelor farmer from Whinburgh, near East Dereham, who never appeared in a hurry, was always near hounds, and rode in steeple-chases. A neighbour of John Cooke's, who usually drove home to Brooke with him, Harry Oliver, a finished horseman, a schooler of hunters for Cooke, who was a dealer in a large way.

Then came two more men, the only non-farming spirits, with the exception of the veterinaries—Paddy Cox and Dicky Dowson—who were bookmakers. Cox was fat, rosy and comfortable, and rode seventeen stone. Dowson lived in a house built with his gains on the turf—known as “Mug’s Hall”. He possessed a certain refinement, missing in Cox, wore a gold ring with a diamond, and gold pince-nez glasses, and rode a chestnut, called Firebrand, which he bought from John Cooke for a great deal of money. Although an ignorant and raw beginner in the chase, I gradually became one of the company through the fatherly Mr. Low.

Memory serves me well as I look back to this smoky atmosphere—hearing the deep voice of John Cooke:

“Good hay is a luxury—you can always buy good oats; but a good piece of hay is what a horse likes, and he’ll eat it all night!”

“Where did you cross that big place in the bottom after we left Ashwellthorpe?” asks one.

“Lord! I never had it at all; my horse wouldn’t begin to look at it, so I gave up. That was the last I saw of them,” etc., etc.

These precious hours, though short, were costly, for each in turn paid for a round of drinks for all. Fearing to lose favour, and affecting bold opulence, I paid my shot also, though this made a considerable inroad in the gold in my pocket.

It was but a step to the cab rank on the market from this “good-bye” house. As the company thinned, a few remaining there, indulging in one more round, would settle to dine at the Maid’s Head, and, filling a growler or two, were soon in that warm, cosy little bar, seated around the polished mahogany Queen Anne table, “selling the pony” for sherry. Soup, fish, pheasant, sweet and savoury, a fat head waiter, glad to see us. Whatever the dinner, whatever the hours, the inevitable journey behind a horse, fresh and impatient to be home, was for all the final act.

## GOING OUT HUNTING

A COLD winter's morning at Church Farm; my breakfast—just an ordinary one of the period—had been two eggs and large rashers of good, home-cured bacon; a wood fire burned in the grate, and Joe sat watching the flames, knowing that this was not his day out. The room at the end of the passage was snug and cosy; not a care in my mind; not a letter on the table. I admired myself in the mirror; already I had blossomed out into what may be called “a hell of a fellow”. I was dressed in the same style as the farmer members of that Hunt, known as the Norwich Staghounds—a black velvet cap on my head, a dark grey melton coat, white cord breeches, and boots with dark-brown tops. Already I was used to this natty costume. The years had flown. From a humble amateur wearing a grey whipcord suit, with bowler and leggings, I had grown to this, encouraged by the possession of the brown mare who had become my mainstay in the chase.

Not only did I possess this trusty friend; another and darker brown thoroughbred mare with a mane and long, banged tail stood in the next box. She had cost me only forty guineas at Spelman's sale, and knew more about hunting than I did. Her name was Rebecca. She had a fine head and eye, large ears and, unlike the other mare, was not disfigured by a hogged or shaved-off mane. But to the story.

On this particular day the Meet was at Wymondham, some eight miles off, and George, my good lad, came round to the door to see if I was ready to start. Going out through the side gate to the stables, I was soon mounted on a well-done, well-groomed, sound animal, which not only carried me hunting, but often served as model. Fancying myself, I jogged on towards Mulbarton, taking the left-hand road from there onwards. Passing his gate, Millard, a farmer neighbour and friend, joined me. On the way others appeared; and so on to the King's Head at Wymondham, where the horses were taken round to the yard by various men under the head ostler, whilst their riders foregathered inside, drinking, talking, “gassing” away—until the Master, Jack Cooke, who had gone out, reappeared and said, “Well, gentlemen, the deer was enlarged twenty minutes ago”.

BERNEVILLE

FEB. 15. 1918.

Vet. Capt. Duhault

A. J. MURPHY



*The Vet Captain, Joe Duhault, drawn at Berneville, 1918. See page 309.*



*The Brigade Interpreter, Comte d'Eytchegoyen. Off to Domart in the pouring rain. Getting into the mess-cart.*



*Watering horses on the march.*



The yard behind the hotel and the market-place in front were then all life and bustle.

Whips and hounds were gathered by the famous old market cross for a minute or so until the Master rode out on one of his large, useful horses. With hounds and hunt servants ahead, the cavalcade of farmers, a doctor or two, a squire or two, a butcher, perhaps, a veterinary, some hard-riding ladies; and last but not least, cavalry officers in scarlet from the Norwich Barracks, who had driven out in a four-in-hand—all followed with a clatter into the country and to the field where the deer had been enlarged.

There was a thrill of expectancy about it all. Those wishing to show their prowess rode into the meadow where hounds were laid on, whilst others stayed on the road, leading the line of carts and gigs driven by folk who wanted to see the sight. Cunning riders were out to watch which way hounds were going to run, whilst the brave faced the first stiff fence and ditch out of the meadow and followed hounds.

For half an hour it was a fast hunt, and scent good. Being on a clever animal, I could get across that country as well as many others. It is easy to ride a "made" horse. The jumping in that part of Norfolk was mostly a small bank with a low-cut fence and a wide, deep field ditch, either on the take-off or landing side. A good horse did it easily. But who is this coming along, addressing me as "Sponge my lad"? It is Dick Bullard, who sold me the brown mare. He is no longer selling horses at Old Catton, but is living at Thorpe, with meadows and stabling there. Although still in a precarious position financially, he is in a more certain way of life than before, and is riding some horse or other for sale, and enjoying a spell out. Sam Kidman—the adventurous, tall, long-legged Sam—moustached, black-capped, and in white breeches, is calling to his big horse, which is inclined to be careless, to "hold up!" There is Stephen Sutton on the roan; George Gowing, the secretary, known as "Snap-eye", sitting well forward on his safe conveyance, blowing out his cheeks as he goes; far ahead the Master is leading at what appears to be a slow canter. Paddy Cox follows behind, bathed in perspiration, and so the Hunt passes, strung out, from parish to parish.

Unlike a fox hunt, they go on and on if a good deer is out. Church steeples show ahead, and are left behind. Through quiet villages and farms we clatter on into the open country again. The pace slackens to a check. Again hounds are on the line, and so, hugging headlands and furrow on the ploughland, and sailing on across pastures and a stubble or two, after an hour

we arrive at a farm, where a farm-hand warns us that the deer has run into a turnip-house and is shut in there safely. Nobody wants another hunt. The second deer, which is somewhere on the roads in the ever-following deer-cart, is not enlarged. The one in the turnip-house is picked up later by the cart, and we all ride to our homes as best we can.

Many and many a good hunt have I had with carted deer in Norfolk. The subscription was ten pounds a year; a horse cost little to keep; few followers were out—forty at the most—and there were no motor cars. Often, after a long point of some fifteen or twenty miles, if we found ourselves near a town like Diss or Harleston, a special train came from Norwich, consisting of enough horse-boxes and one passenger coach to take us all back, at the cost of seven and sixpence each! This is true, although almost unbelievable. At Swainsthorpe the train would stop, my steed was unloaded on to the platform and I led her the few yards up to Church Farm, where George would have gruel ready. Mrs. Lodes then appeared at the door saying, "Well, Mr. Munnin's, you don't look as though you've bin in a ditch to-day!", and Joe would appear, jumping around in welcome, and I would go in to change. No bathroom! And I never missed it! A hip-bath was the thing.

Hunting became part of my life, and I saw many things on those days: bright winter sunlight on clipped horses and scarlet coats; on bare trees; stacks; on farmhouse gables; the riding out after a slight frost; the riding home with a frost beginning and a young moon in the sky; puddles already crisping over as I said good night to friends. Such were needed to freshen my mind and vision.

Here is another kind of day—I remember, it was in February; I still wanted another water-colour to make up my six for the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours Exhibition. That morning, full of hope, I was going out hunting, but seeing the bright sun with early spring in the air, I resisted the urgent desire to go to the meet. Dashing up to my bedroom, I was soon into my old clothes, to the disappointment of George, who was always glad to send me on my way to a hunt.

"Get Rebecca saddled, George, and get out the scarlet coat and cap," said I in haste.

Hurrying to the studio, I bustled around, gathering easel and water-colours, and marched out to the fray, to my "hidden spot", where the scarlet wasn't seen from the road. George was ready to get up on to the glossy, clipped-out mare, each looking the part. I remember his pose—his right hand was resting on

the rump of the mare as he turned, looking back, pretending to be a whipper-in calling to tail hounds.

Soon I had composed, started, and was well on the way to finishing the picture. It was bright, fresh, and looking well by one o'clock. After two o'clock I was out again, completing background, bare trees, fields and distance, as they appeared with the horse and rider. Between 3 and 4 p.m. I had finished with ease, and was full of a sense of satisfaction, with hands growing cold, as two friends on horseback came riding along a headland on an adjoining field.

"What sort of a day?" I called.

"Not too bad," was the reply.

The result of this day's work was cheering to a poor painter dependent on the brush for his living. Behold, in the Spring, on just such a bright morning, a dear old maiden lady, a neighbour, had looked in to ask me to supper with herself and bachelor brother. The letters had just come. I opened them. Two were from the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, in one of which the Secretary informed me of the sale of three works. I shouted "Hurrah!", and so did the old maid. Then I opened the other one, and read the usual notice: "Your drawing, number so and so, has been purchased by"—But what was this?—I looked and looked—"Queen Alexandra". Could such things be? I read and shouted it to the old lady, and rushed out to the stables to tell George, with Miss Irons—that was her name—rushing out, too. "Seize my coat behind, or I'll go up in smoke!" I cried, and she seized my coat, holding on and crying, "Whoa, Alfred!", as I called George, and went to take a look at the placid Rebecca as she gazed out of the door. She certainly had earned her keep for a while, for the picture had sold for the vast amount of twenty-five guineas!

## WITH THE NORWICH STAGHOUNDS

ON the mornings after a hunt my breeches could be seen on a line in the yard drying in the wind. My boots were brought in by George, who used to polish them with a shank-bone to give a finish. As I became acquainted with Mr. Sponge—so well acquainted that I imagined he had really lived—I used to like my tops to look dark. There were mornings when I rode the five miles into Norwich to box my steed on the train with the rest at Thorpe station, and on the way through the city admired myself in the plate-glass windows, thinking what a deuce of a fellow I was. The white string gloves looked well, and my boots shone. At the station we packed into a carriage, and were full of fun and nonsense and horse and farm talk, until we arrived either at Tivetshall, Pulham, Harleston, Diss or some such place, when we got our horses out, and rode to this hall, or lodge, or farmhouse, or inn. At such places as Quidenham Hall—then the seat of Lord Albemarle—a champagne breakfast, with game-pies, sausage-rolls and many other good things to eat and drink, would set us all alight, and soon, well-primed with “jumping powder”, we were taking the jumps as they came, going great guns; that is, if hounds ran.

I did not always ride my own horses. One was often lent to me, and on an occasion Paddy Cox made me take his famous mount out for the day. I protested, saying, “Something might happen to it.”

“Alfred,” said Paddy, as he sat sipping Heidseck on a Sunday morning at Thorpe Gardens Inn, “you ride the ’oss—if he breaks ’is neck, or your own, it won’t matter a damn!”

The meet was at Attleborough, I think, and we boxed from Norwich. In the train Cooke, the Master, said to me:

“Are you riding Paddy’s horse, Munnings? If you are, he’ll jump you off—he’s a big ‘lepper’.”

This made me think; and when I got on to that great, wide, shiny old stuffed saddle of Paddy’s, I began to think more. Cooke might be right. When we got down into the town of Attleborough and went into an hotel for a drink, I slipped out again, unseen, bought some powdered resin at a chemist’s, and rubbed it into the leathers of my breeches and the inside of my tops. This had a wonderful effect.

"Mind what I told you about that horse," said Cooke, as we started out.

There had been some rain, and the scent was good, although the going was heavy. This was a first-class hunt over a big country. Wire didn't exist in Norfolk then, and we sailed on with hounds running a field and more ahead.

Riding a horse, up to at least sixteen or seventeen stone, I had a great day—the best I remember. Duhallow was the horse's name, and he was a mighty hunter. Scarcely feeling my weight, and being allowed to go instead of following in the wake, taking each jump from a stand as he did with his fat master, he found himself up in the front rank, consisting of Jones the whip, Cooke the master, and Harry Oliver on a young horse belonging to Cooke. After a fast gallop we came up to the deer in the floods at Bressingham Fen near Diss. Very soon, wading in over the tops of our boots, Frank Jones and I between us took the deer, got the line on it, and pushed and cajoled it back to a farm nearby. We were soaked. I had sat down in the water, and was wet to the waist. Arriving at a stackyard where the whip had our horses, Jones said, "Lie on your back and let the water run out of your boots," which we did. "Get back to Diss Crown," said everybody, riding off, I making double speed. There the ostler pulled off my boots, the landlord lent me dry clothes, and I found the others in the parlour at tea, and ate four or five eggs with the rest. Then hot rum, until word came that the special was at the station. Horses had had warm gruel; ostler and grooms were rewarded; and again we found ourselves in a snug railway carriage on our way back.

"You rode that horse well, Munnings," said the Master, and I swelled with pride.

"He carried me and I sat there," said I, not saying a word about the powdered resin.

Pleasant memories of the past!

"'Ow did ye get on with the 'oss?" asked Paddy when I saw him next.

"Marvellous! What a horse he is!" I replied.

"You shall ride 'im again," said Paddy, his fat pink jowl overlapping his collar, his feet crossed, a large regal cigar in his mouth, and a look of perfect content on his shining countenance.

In these modern times of luxurious horse-boxes we have forgotten the many miles we rode to a meet, and the many weary miles home. With carted deer, this meant only one horse; a second horse would have been impossible on those long runs taking us from the middle of Norfolk to its southern border, and

sometimes well into Suffolk, according to where the meet took place.

Perhaps my longest day on one horse, the brown mare, was when the meet was at the famous Scole Inn, the White Hart. The Suffolk Stagounds, then under the Mastership of Sir William Burton (who sailed Sir Thomas Lipton's famous yacht, *Shamrock*, in races for the America Cup), were going to find an outlying deer, which was in Billingford Wood. The deer was soon found, and heading south, crossed the River Waveney into Suffolk near Hoxne Mill, going on through many parishes. It was taken a mile or so on this side of Halesworth, at a place called Chediston. Those of the Norwich followers who were there at the finish rode home via Harleston, making a break at the Swan, where the sweet Sally and her sisters were still living, and where we were served in that old snuggerie at the round table by Sally herself.

After the steeds had been given gruel and were well wisped down, we set out again. The actual distance that I covered that day, apart from the hunt, must have been considerable. From Swainsthorpe to the Scole Inn along the turnpike is fifteen miles; the hunt, as the hounds ran, would have been at least ten miles; from Chediston to the Swan, Harleston, another ten; and from Harleston to Swainsthorpe sixteen miles—a wonderful proof of the staying powers of a sound, hard horse!

Recalling one incident leads to a crowd of others—I could fill a volume if I began to recount the many adventures and doings when following hounds in Norfolk, long before the first War—when people drove to a meet with a horse and trap and when no long processions of motor-cars followed along the road from one draw to another. But one more picture:

A new comet had appeared on our horizon, in the form of a sprightly little fellow from Yorkshire, who spoke with a broad accent. He had hunted with the York and Ainstey, the Sinnington and such like, and he certainly did show some of our stars the way over Norfolk. His father must have been a man of means, for he had either bought a Norfolk newspaper or shares in it, and no doubt this was to find a job for his son—to keep him employed. Here is the picture I am leading up to.

Stephen Sutton, one of our thrusters, who has been mentioned in these pages, could not bear to see a little "foreigner" showing us how to do it. The meet had been at Brooke, and we were well away. Two or three of us—Stephen Sutton in the lead—were galloping along a sound grass track bordered on the left by a yawning ditch, with a flight of strong posts and rails on the far side of it. Hounds were running hard, left-handed in the

fields beyond this obstacle. Then, lo and behold! there was the Yorkshireman following hounds—mounted on a large white horse looking as if it had stepped out of an old print—coming across the field we were in and making straight for the ditch and rails which had stopped us. Seeing that he was going to jump the place, we pusillanimous riders pulled up our horses to watch. Without any hesitation the white horse, perfectly balanced, made a magnificent leap, clearing the big ditch and post-and-rails, like a horse clearing the Chair jump at Liverpool. All were amazed at this except Stephen. “Come on,” said he to his trusty horse, and before we knew what was happening, he had ridden the horse well out into the field and turned it round, whilst we sat speechless, wondering what he was going to do next.

Stephen could not stand being beaten by this rival from Yorkshire. With another “Come on”, he rode straight at the ditch; I don’t suppose that good horse had ever refused in his life, and he did not refuse on this occasion: he made a bold leap, but hitting the post-and-rails with his chest, turned a complete somersault into the next field. The top rail had broken with the sound of a gun. This, and the sight of the horse rolling over its master, gave us a shock. We sat aghast, but on seeing Stephen and the horse again on their feet, and safe and sound, we laughed and laughed until we nearly fell off our horses.

“There,” said Stephen, looking at the great plaster of mud on the poor horse’s forehead, unaware of the plaster of mud on his own back and velvet cap. “Who would have thought it? Did anybody ever see such a thing in their life?”

Stephen’s rival had known our Master, Mr. Cooke, long before this; both used to hunt together in the Holderness, a country where many good horses were bred and ridden. Cooke himself always bought his horses in Yorkshire or Ireland, and rode a large galloping sort. The stud which the Yorkshireman brought with him was a useful one. The white horse I have mentioned—which looked like a print—was of a shape and make which seem to have disappeared. It must have stood a full 16.2; its girth was enormous. When I tell readers that the little Yorkshireman rode about ten stone, including saddle, they will better understand how such a horse, carrying such a weight, could so easily clear such a place.

Frank Jones, our Irish whipper-in, a well-bred fellow and perfect horseman, cantered up at that moment, with a tail hound, just in time to witness the leap and the disaster, and called out, “Shure, and that’s how the thing should be done”, not referring, of course, to Sutton’s effort!

Jones has been spoken of as one of the best horsemen over a country in his day. Later, he left the hunt, and went to Mr. John Henry Stokes, of Market Harborough, where he gained fame schooling horses for Stokes, with the Fernie, Pytchley and Quorn. Mr. Faber, who used to write the Pytchley Runs in the *Horse and Hound* under the nom de plume of "Gin and Beer", always referred to Jones as "the man in the black cap".

A long time ago, during a Christmas season in Norwich, five of us were making our way to the Cathedral Close. We were going to the top of the spire to see the view and get an appetite for an early dinner—a strange, uncommon way of spending a winter's afternoon. It was a merry party. There were three young women, who were playing in comic opera at the Theatre Royal, the son of the lessee of that theatre, and myself. A fall of snow had given a festive look to the city, and the low sun cast blue shadows. Chattering away, trudging through a snowy street towards the Close, we met Frank Jones coming out of a saddler's shop, and took him with us. Mounting the interminable stone steps of the tower and the final ladders inside the spire, we reached the top chamber and looked out of the windows. Not only were we breathless with the ascent, but with the sight of all the snow-covered roofs three hundred and fifteen feet below.

"Sure," said Jones, leaning out—"sure, and if only we knew it, there has been, there is, or there will be trouble under every roof we see beneath us!"

Yesterday I received a letter from Norwich enclosing a photograph of my signature written long ago on the wall of the small chamber at the top of the spire. It must have been done before the Jones visit, for the sight of the snow-covered city and the surrounding country put every other thing from my mind—a superb scene.

On another occasion at a Meet we were inside a hospitable farmhouse. Decanters of port, sherry and other glittering, cheerful-looking bottles and concoctions stood in close assembly with the cold eatables on shining tables; all were busy—talking, sipping—eating; Jones, looking spruce in his scarlet, talking to a group. Suddenly the Master came up and said to him, "Get out to the stables and horses, where your place is," and Jones went. Said Jones, later, as we galloped, "Sure, and it is a great man, and maybe he is right—but one day when he cusses me, I'll get off my horse, let him go, fling my red coat on the ground and walk off."

When Jones left the Hunt, the light-weight Yorkshireman replaced him as amateur whip, which suited the Master, for he took





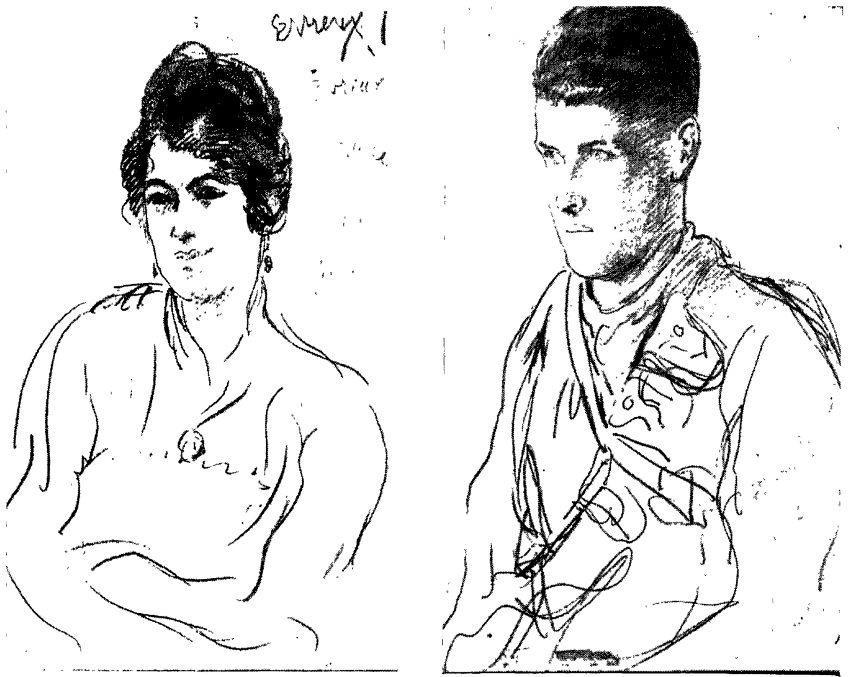
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"I was painting Prince Antoine on a black horse in the sunlight." See page 305.



24" × 30"

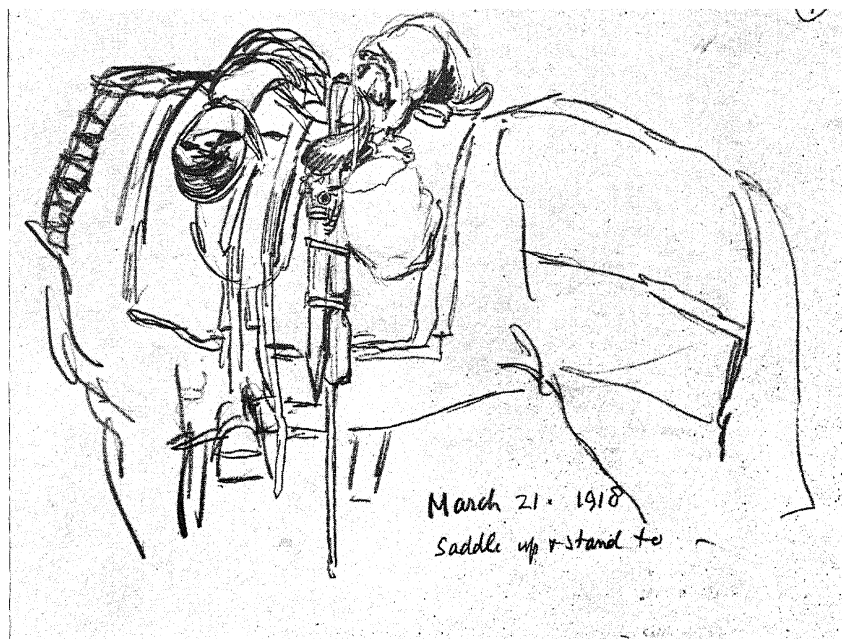
Brigade-Major Geoffrey Brooke, famous with his horses in the Army high-jumping competitions. See page 305.



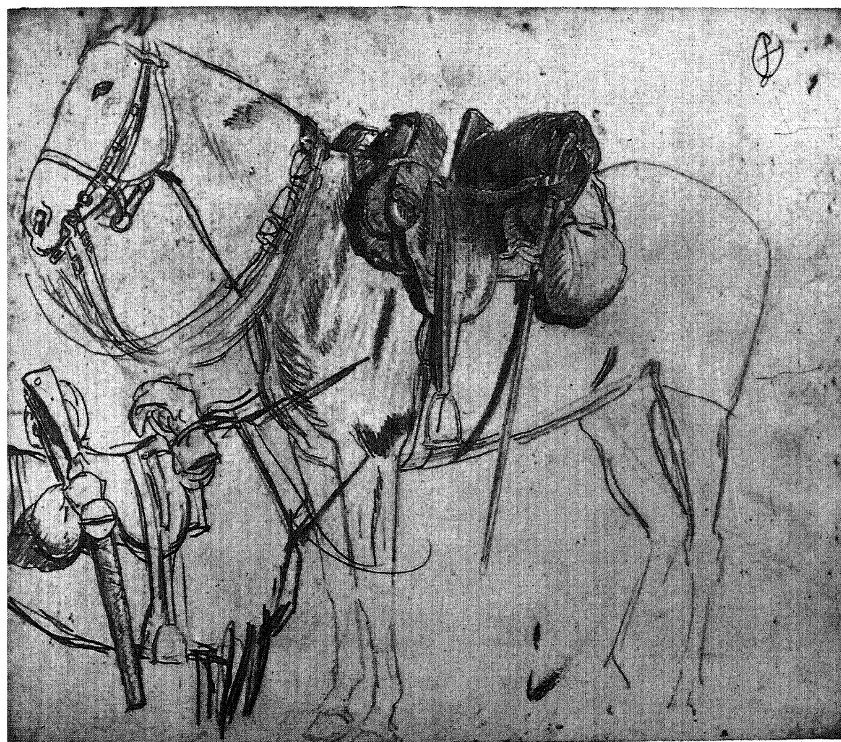
11" x 9"  
 Left: Proprietress of the Hotel du Grand Cerf, Eureux, 1918.  
 Right: Strathcona trooper, 18th March, 1918.



Rowland Hill of the "Montreal Star" and his escorting officer asleep in the Hotel St. James, Paris, 2.30 a.m., 18th May, 1918. See page 315.

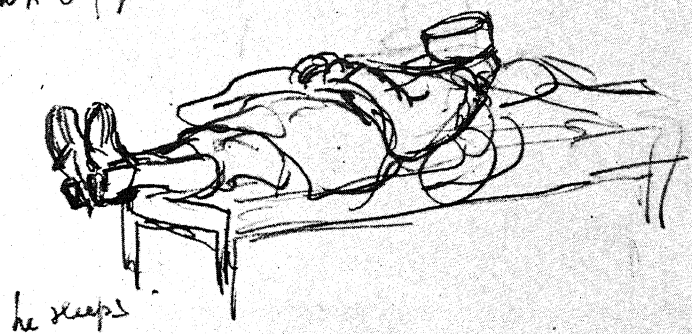


*Saddle up and stand to, 31st March, 1918. See page 307.*

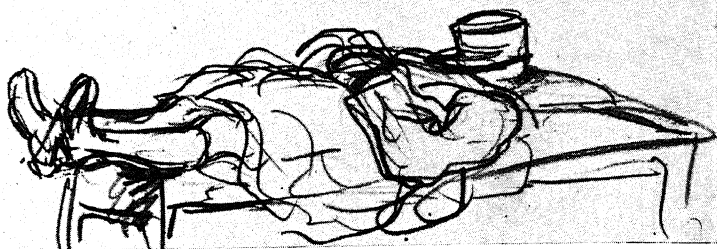


*11" x 9"  
Full marching order.*

Rollaux Dupage. Interpreter. resting in retreat  
march 1918.



he sleeps



"Dugage slept on his camp bed, stretched straight out on his back, in boots, breeches and leggings, with his toes turned upwards, like a figure on a tomb." See page 306.



Officer & batman in  
Chateau

An officer and batman at the château at Davenescourt.

no pay and rode his own horses. We called him "By Goom", because he made much use of that expression.

At those Saturday afternoon gatherings in the snug bar in St. Giles, Norwich, his voice could be heard addressing the Master, "By goom, Jack"—pronounced "Jark"—"yon was a big place at t'bottom of t'wood"; or, "By goom, who's having another drink?"; or "By goom, what about dinner?"

My last dart. One day the high, far-stretching railway embankment at Fornsett stopped the hunt. The deer had crossed the railway there, hounds followed. The Master, a determined man, with Jones, the whip, followed by two more—a lady and myself—jumped a fence on to the embankment, climbed the steep side, and galloped along the railroad, risking meeting a train, until we saw on the other side below us a white gate. Riding down to the gate, and waiting whilst Jones quickly broke the padlock with his whip handle, we were again away, and, by some lucky chance, picked up with hounds. The followers left on the other side of the railway had gone galloping for an arch leading under the line some way ahead, and we never saw them again.

After a long, slow hunt, making a point of twenty miles, we found the deer shut in a shed at Banham, not far from Attleborough. The four of us who had finished—Master, whip, the lady and myself—called at an inn, known as Banham Garden House, where they had only cider, and where I stood drinks, the lady, Miss Daisy Birkbeck, remarking, "There, Mr. Munnings, you can now say that you once stood drinks to the whole of the field!"

Vera, the renowned mare this lady was riding that day, was one of those rare phenomena which appear, play a part and become famous in a district, leaving behind a reputation lasting half a century. Vera's owner had asked me to do a little water-colour of herself and the mare. On a previous day with the Harriers, I had seen them brushing through a straggling fence of maple, jumping a wide ditch, and scattering a trail of yellow leaves into the air. This was the subject of the little water-colour. Like many of the friends of those days, both are long dead, but their combined exploits remain forgotten. . . .

Taking advantage of modern transport, I can within an hour find myself nearing those scenes of the past. Leaving the White Horse at Stoke Ash on the Norwich road behind, I come to Yaxley Bull, then to the White Hart at Scole. Beyond this famous inn the turnpike goes north through Dickleburgh, and passes on through the heart of south Norfolk. On either side I

see miles of farming country, fences, ditches, hedgerows, trees and distant roads. Lying away on the left is Tivetshall, with its inn called the Ram, and next come Wacton Duke and Stratton Swan. Their names recall many meets and many faces and horses in all sorts of weather. This road is a ribbon filled with the memories of generations, and my infinitesimal grains of memory are rolled up with the rest. Each road or lane, turning right or left, leads to more and yet still more vistas of farming, villages and church towers, and more inns—more meets and more exploits. As I write, the map of Norfolk lies on my table, and I see such names as Wymondham, Wrenningham, Ashwellthorpe, Flordon, Tibenham, Hempnall, Kirstead, Topcroft, Morningthorpe, Hardwick, and I begin to see sweating horses, rosy-faced, sweating farmers in black caps—a straggling hound or two—but the ticking of the tall clock in the hall goes on, and the picture vanishes.

## SHOOTING DAYS AND PARTIES

NORFOLK is a shooting county, and it would seem strange were I to leave out memories of jolly Pickwickian shooting-parties with friends. I never took to shooting. When living at home in the early days my brothers did all the shooting. Once only have I taken life with a gun. A poor little water-rat sat on the weeds amongst the bulrushes quietly nibbling some succulent end. I took a long and careful aim from a very short distance away, and blew it to bits. This was my first and only shot, excepting those with rifles at fairs!

I was often asked to join a set of friends who lived in and around Norwich. They made a syndicate and took a shoot. This syndicate generally consisted of the brothers Boswell, my friend Adcock, a prosperous business man or two, a fat lawyer, an auctioneer and a brewer. All these men were fond of life, and whatever they did, they did well. Those shoots were done well—almost too well—so that after lunch the shooting was sometimes a little wild.

One of the shoots that these jolly men had taken year after year lay south of Norwich, in the parishes of Bunwell and Ashwellthorpe. To give an idea how long ago all this happened, we drove out from Norwich to Bunwell in a roomy, closed-in wagonette, drawn by a pair of horses. One might imagine a third horse being necessary when the great luncheon-basket appeared and was placed in some recess under the driver's tall box-seat.

Awaiting our arrival were a keeper and odd men and boys to carry the game. The birds, if I recollect aright, were seldom driven; the party preferred to walk the stubbles and roots in line, with well-trained dogs working slightly ahead.

How often have I, as a man without a gun—a mere looker-on out for the day—walked through mangolds and swedes in line with my friends of the past. There hangs in a house at Southwold, in the possession of a colonel, an early canvas painted from memory the very next day after one of those shoots. It was done in the top room over Boswell's shop in London Street, Norwich. I can picture the scene now as I saw it, walking at the right-hand end of the line. A row of healthy-looking sportsmen in perspec-

tive, stalking a field of swedes, their dogs just ahead of them. This was a humorous painting—I made the most of the eighteen-stone lawyer who is the nearest man in the picture. Each figure in the receding row and each dog stalking ahead is a characteristic portrait. Following in the rear are keeper's men and boys carrying pheasants, partridges, hares and rabbits. A Norfolk hedgerow, with hedgerow oaks, forms the horizon; the whole party is slowly advancing. A warm October sun lights up the scene, particularly the red jowl of the lawyer in the foreground!

Although a crude effort, this early painting had a truth about it, and each man recognised his own portrait and that of his dog; a great deal of fun was made of them. I was inspired by this particular scene following one of those bacchanalian lunches, when the contents of that basket—not only of food but of drink—had had its reddening effect on the countenance of the company. It was not the mellow light of the October sun alone that gave the glow!

I remember an occasion on one of the return journeys in the wagonette during an election period. We called at a large wayside inn on the Norwich turnpike, known as the King of Prussia. That evening the large tap-room was filled with rustic Radicals who needed guidance. One of our party—a gifted orator in his way—after having stood round after round, gave them a political speech. Here was a Rowlandson scene—flushed faces of stalwart sons of the soil, each wearing his own style of dress—this was in the days when men wore corduroys, sleeve-waistcoats, and coloured handkerchiefs round their necks. Their Norfolk faces tanned and coloured by the weather, they were men who knew the soil, who could handle a team, feed bullocks and look after a flock of sheep.

At last the speaker, leaving more rounds of drinks for those in the tap-room of the King of Prussia, was borne away, helped into the wagonette and so home.

I have said that these were Pickwickian parties. I do not know if any of those men are alive to-day, but I do know, and still remember, in spite of all the years between, some verses of a poem that I wrote about that shoot. I have no written copy whatever of these lines; the opening verses have escaped my memory, but this is how some of the verses went:

If only the birds had stayed on the land  
Each man and each dog would have done well;  
But this is just what they did not understand;  
Those damned silly birds down in Bunwell.



The coveys were artful and each bird said  
When somebody shouted "Over",  
"What I prefer to an ounce of lead  
Is the next-door neighbour's clover."

Sam Boswell's new dog, a useless brute called Spider, would dash off in front, scaring all the birds. He at last was put on a lead. In the following verse Sam addresses the dog:

Spider, I'll pick up a clod  
And throw at your head, by God!  
If you don't leave off running and be a bit cunning,  
You stupid old, silly old s—d!

It gives me a queer feeling to sit here and write of those far-off days—sometimes it all seems like a dream. I must make another trip to my friend's house at Southwold to see that crude painting and assure myself that I really was once one of those who walked that field of swedes after the Pickwickian lunch at Bunwell.

## NORFOLK AND CORNWALL

DATES fail me, but it must have been either in the late summer of 1910 or 1911 that my friend Stones and I journeyed by sea to Cornwall. For years we had known of the famous Newlyn School, and were curious to see this country which attracted artists. Stones, with a bright mind, was always ready for a move, and it was he who arranged our voyage to Falmouth. At Tilbury Dock, on a warm September day, we boarded a cargo-passenger-carrying ship, which took us round to Southampton, Portsmouth, Plymouth and finally to Falmouth. In days when telephones and motor transport were only beginning, we seemed to make less of travel than we do now. Arriving by train at Penzance, we stepped into an open four-wheeled cab, and with the blue bay on the left of us, jogged along to Newlyn; a fine ending to a happy journey. How lodgings were found and what we did during that fortnight is of little matter, but on that pleasant voyage we met an interesting old lady who was full of a new edition of *Omar Khayyam*, which was then being more and more widely read. She passed the book on to me, and the reading of it became a literary landmark in my existence. Soon I was full of Omar, and have never forgotten some of the verses committed to memory on the cargo-boat going to Falmouth. I can recall the little, old-fashioned lady who lent me the book, and only last week, when looking at a large photograph of Fitzgerald's fisherman friend, Posh, and thinking what a Viking he was, I recollected that chance acquaintance of long ago. Although during our stay we saw the Cornish coast towards Land's End and frolicked on moors, and saw prehistoric huts and stone circles for the first time, my clearest memory is that introduction to *Omar Khayyam*, and the kind soul who lent me the book.

Our east-to-west journey, taking us to the far end of Cornwall, was a complete change to an East Anglian like myself. At that time I had not even seen Stonehenge. The district south-west of Norwich which embraced the Swainsthorpe environment was well-timbered. The prevailing hedgerow trees were oaks, their foliage partially embowering lanes and small hamlets. Many farms were set amongst oak-trees, and any farm of importance had, as a distinguishing feature, an ancient oak standing in the

middle of its home pasture by the house, underneath which generations of cart-horses had stood on summer Sundays for centuries. These farms were often large, with good buildings, long, red-tiled barns and well-filled stack-yards; a horse-pond or two or a surrounding moat completed the scene—a picture which had grown, and was never designed or invented. It was a great cattle and corn-growing area; every other farm possessed its flock of sheep, and cattle filled the yards through the winter.

From all this rich, Norfolk farming country—these vistas of hedgerow-oaks and elms, woodlands, cornfields and low meadows—I found myself in a land of stone walls and tall, stone-faced banks covered with wild flowers and purple foxgloves, which seeded themselves and grew in profusion. Scrubby woods grew on hillsides, trees flourished in the valleys, and only windswept, stunted specimens braved the blasts upon the uplands. It was a wild, almost treeless, stone-walled country, with dairy cows grazing everywhere. Narrow, fast-running trout-streams ran in the bottom of the valleys where, on Saturdays, bearded artists of the days of yore quietly fished for a supper of trout. Looking across one of these valleys to the opposite slope, one saw a chess-board of fields and walls rising to a group of farms where a narrow lane wound its way amongst labyrinths of irregular, rough-built stone walls enclosing tiny grass fields. In the centre of one stood a primitive stone circle, the Merry Maidens.

Such scenery was entirely new, and even more so, the sight and sound of the band of white, moving surf, six hundred feet below, at the foot of steep-pinnacled granite cliffs, which on some great headland stood like castles above the restless surging of the Atlantic ground-swell.

No words can describe these scenic effects. On an August or September day, to lie on the sweet-smelling turf, watching sea-pinks trembling in light winds, and listening to the unceasing sound of the surf and cry of gulls, gives peace and rest to body and soul. Nothing quite like this coast exists anywhere. There were spots where I could laze and be idle and drowsy enough in Norfolk, but of all places, on the right day, I find myself more often longing to be back on those Cornish cliffs, lying in the sun, listening to the incessant sound of the surf.

Having met artists and friends there, I repeated this first visit for a period and worked there, returning to winter in Swainsthorpe. My last and longest stay finally ended in the 1914 war. Little did painting folk in the friendly colony dream of that future. Before leaving Swainsthorpe on this occasion, I had

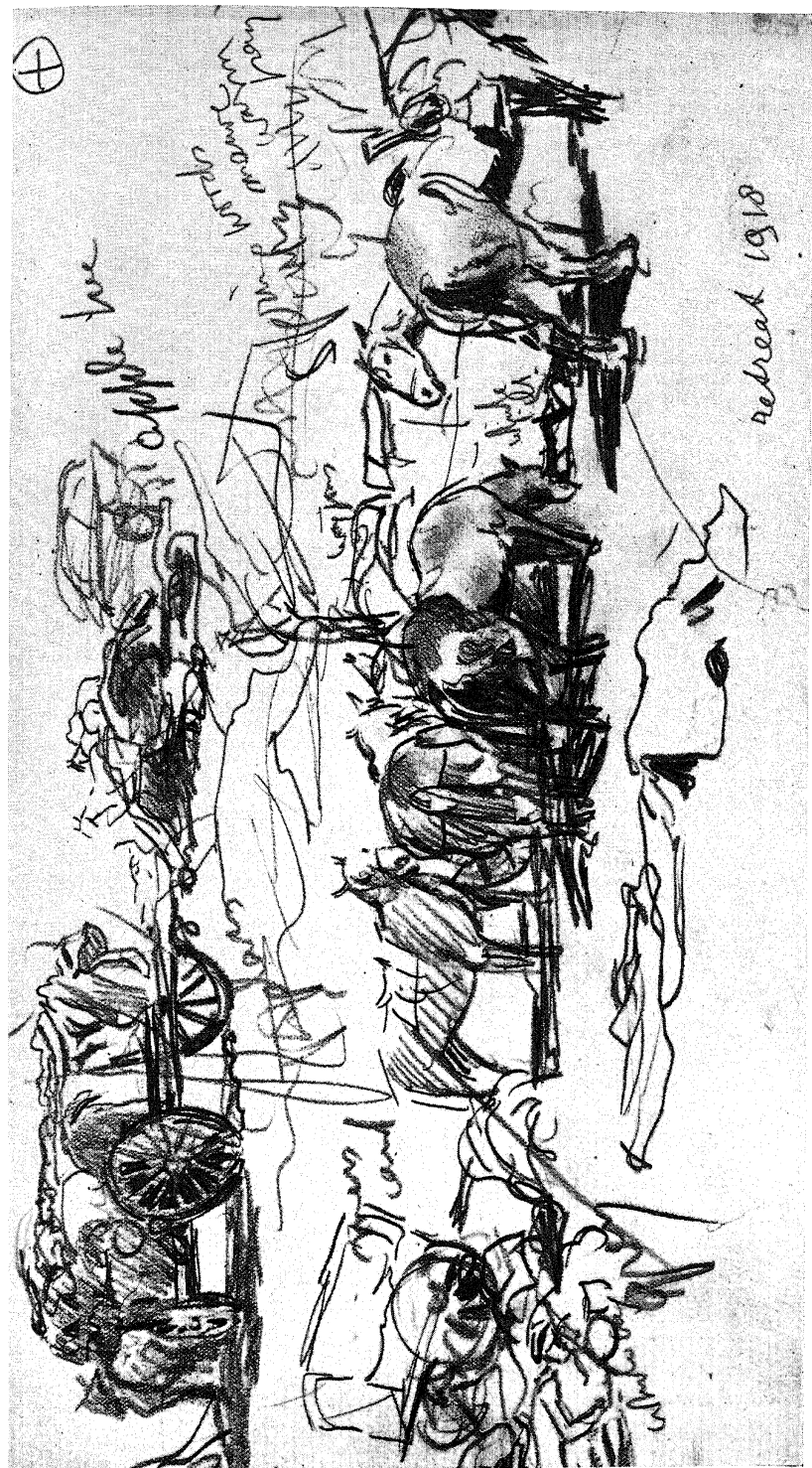
parted with my man, Bob. The thoroughbred mare went to a farmer friend, and mated to St. Lorenzo, a famous Norfolk sire of that day, she produced a good foal for him. The other brown mare I left at my home in Mendham. In my mother's diary kept at that time she writes how she could see through the window Alfred's brown mare and the white pony on the meadows in front of the house. Later she says: "Alfred has written for the mare and his dog, Taffy, to be boxed and sent by train to Penzance". Here is the actual passage in my mother's diary:

"Alfred's mare and Taffy gone to Cornwall to-day. Seaman rode the mare, Taffy followed my trap [meaning her four-wheeler]. Dear Taffy, how I love him and miss all his ways, although his propensity to hunt and stay away often caused me great anxiety. The mare and dog left in one box at 3.32 to arrive next morning at 11.7. I got a wire on Saturday to tell me of their safe arrival. Now I feel I have lost Alfred. The mare and dog were the last links between us."

This was all done. The mare had been ridden to the station, and my mother tells me how she herself went with the white pony to see the dog and horse off, and bring home the man. I well remember meeting the train at Penzance, and my surprise at finding the mare looking so fat and well, and not in the least stiff after the long journey, standing all the time on her feet. Taffy, the dog, was delighted to be out of the box.

This new, and rather larger Welsh terrier never made up for the absence of the departed Joe. Our acquaintance, which had begun at Swainsthorpe, had a shaking when I took him with me to our farm in Arcady. He killed twenty-seven chickens one morning before breakfast! This was a serious business. Chickens, thank heavens, were of much lower value then than they are now, and this slaughter was easily paid for, but the dog had to be taught not to do it again. After feeding the fowls all around us with grain, with Taffy on a lead by my side—at each dart at a fowl he got a beating, until at last he began to understand. A final act was to tie him up in the parlour to the leg of the piano, the only thing in the room which he could not move, and around his neck were hung two dead chickens which he had killed! At the same time I gave him as serious a talking-to as the badger did to the toad in *The Wind in the Willows*. Perhaps I shifted about too often, leaving him with other people; but finally, when I went away to France, of which I shall write later, he made his home at the hotel in Lamorna.

My stables and studio at Lamorna were all in one; the studio, a large converted loft with a skylight, was above the stables. I found a new lad, a primitive Cornish youth. Ned was the name



The horse-lines during Retreat in 1918.



*Colonel Paterson, of the Fort Garry's, afterwards Brigadier General, Canadian Cavalry Brigade.*

of this simple soul, who grew into a useful combination of groom-model, and posed for many a picture.

The imported steed from Norfolk soon learned how to get over that country. She was a clever mare. One day, when out riding, and stopping for a glass of beer at Madron, a well-known character came along on his cob. Seeing a large, useful-looking mare, he got off, looked her over and said :

“ Can she jump? ”

I said, “ You have a pint and give me a lead out of the next field over that little bank.”

“ Right,” said he.

Down went the beer, and I was ready for anything—full of Dutch courage. Trotting his nimble cob up to the wall, it jumped on and off and over, and I followed, my animal imitating his. He rode slowly to the next obstacle—a good stone-faced bank ; over we went. The beer working, I left him and, my animal feeling full of going, like myself, we cleared a dry stone wall and went on jumping this bank and that, coming round in a circle to the inn, whilst my friend sat and watched the performance.

“ Not too bad,” said he, filling his pipe. “ A good mare—but she don’t come from up country, do she? ”

“ Never in these parts before,” said I.

Her performance convinced me that she originally came from Ireland.

How many studies and pictures I made of this animal in my new surroundings it would be hard to say, and soon I had another—a grey, a good sort, called Grey Tick, which I took in to keep off a farm. Grey Tick had carried Tom Mollard, the huntsman. Ned had now become a useful groom, and had the right-coloured face and figure for a scarlet coat and black cap. Often did the patient fellow sit as model for me, and he liked it. I painted water-colours, using him and the horses placed where I wanted them—in a pinewood, on a moor, by a wall. Such backgrounds made compositions and gave the will to work.

Perhaps my best picture at that time, of Ned and the brown mare, was done in tempera. “ The Huntsman ” was its title, and he is jumping a big place in a Norfolk country.

Living in Cornwall, I had a strong desire to paint a Norfolk hunting incident such as I had seen again and again in that country. The huntsman, silhouetted against the sky, is lying back as his horse clears the rough, overgrown fence and ditch, to land well over on the other side. This was shown at my first Exhibition in 1913 at the Leicester Galleries. On the day, before the opening, the late Mr. Brown, the senior partner, said to me,

“Well, now, I propose to pay you forty guineas”—I think my price was fifty or sixty—“for this picture, with the copyright, just to give the show a start.” I eagerly accepted his offer. Afterwards a good reproduction in colour was made, and ever since then this plate has been selling, and hangs in many homes. I would like to add that this is an exact portrait of my friend of yore, the brown mare.



## ZENNOR

WE have read how Cézanne went on painting a plate of apples for weeks and months, and how he had over a hundred sittings for Vollard's portrait; the two mares, the grey and the brown, were my plates of apples. I once went on for weeks painting the grey against a grey stone wall on grey days. Ned was patient, so were those two blessed mares.

I will now tell of a move and campaign similar to those which I used to make in Norfolk. Zennor, on the north coast of Cornwall, not far from St. Ives, was at that time a primitive and unspoilt village. Being in a granite country, where the soil was shallow, huge masses of stone were built into walls; every wall on each side of every lane consisted of huge slabs of split granite. Each farm was divided into small fields, and the stone which had been cleared from the ground was piled into walls, some being half as wide as a room. Great stones of strange shapes stood near the houses on either side of the brow of the hill where the road leads to St. Ives. In fact, this was a most picturesque and primitive place. Having seen the village more than once whilst the hounds were drawing for a fox on Zennor Hill, and having visited it many times with friends, I was itching to get to the place and use Ned and the horses in fresh scenes. It happened like this: my paraphernalia was packed in the village waggonette and driven over to Zennor by Mr. Jory, the complacent landlord of the Lamorna Inn, his old black mare, called Bess, between the shafts. Amongst this paraphernalia were the scarlet coat, black cap, white breeches and boots. Ned and I rode the mares across the moors, a matter of fourteen or fifteen miles.

A hefty, six-foot Cornish farmer, Mr. Berryman, let me part of his stables as standing for the two models. This farmer was a good friend to me, and so were his two great sons. I had already ordered a ton of hay to be sent from the corn-dealer at Penzance; the farmer supplied me with oats, and the two mares were done well. I had arranged lodgings with a Mrs. Griggs, and had her front parlour, whilst Ned had a bedroom, and fed in the kitchen with the landlady—all this for the vast sum of one guinea for myself and fifteen shillings a week for Ned! In those days, before motor traffic brought sight-seers and countless visitors to Corn-

wall, lodgings were cheap; farm butter and clotted cream were in abundance; no electric pylons or posts straddled the moors or lined the roads; no sounds of motor horns disturbed the villages; no great char-a-bancs took up the whole of a narrow road, forcing unfortunate people to retire to some wider space or pull in a gateway whilst they sailed past. All was serenity and peace; a good cart-horse or two on every farm doing what work was needed, and yellow Jersey cows everywhere.

Repeating the same methods I always used on principle in my earlier Norfolk adventures, I at once started into work. The morning after our arrival, the humble Ned, to the surprise of Mrs. Griggs, appeared in white cord breeches and top boots, and at about 9.30 a.m., riding Grey Tick, with a mackintosh to hide his scarlet coat, he came towards me up the hill where I was already planted with easel, canvas and box. This was a start. What could be better? Ned shed his mackintosh. I told him to ride a little way down the hill and then come slowly up again. "Stop, stop, Ned! That's all right; keep where you are." Then, with a twenty-four-by-twenty canvas as a feeler, I began to put down my composition. A loafer or two in the village below stood and stared, a boy or two appeared, and not long after the start a fellow came up.

"Oh!" said he, "I thought the hounds were out."

I said, "It's quite all right; you can see what I'm doing—now run away and leave me to it."

All these Cornish people were used to artists. It was the home of artists, and everybody understood their ways. Perhaps it was the artists who helped to popularise that end of Cornwall and brought increasing crowds to the West.

Here is the scene of the painting. A grey sky; a boulder, strewn hill, with flat spaces of grey granite showing amongst the heather-clad sides sloping down to the moor below. Beyond that undulating moors, fields and stone walls. Farther away, Guava Cairn, grey against the yet paler grey of the faint distant horizon beyond Morvah, and through all this the Land's End road curving away out of sight. Coming up the hill with hounds was Ned on the grey, the scarlet coat in low tones, the black velvet cap the darkest note of colour—a splendid subject.

Cheered by such a sight, I set the whole impression down before one o'clock. This was the only way to begin—no messing about. Get started. A good thing for Ned; a good thing for the horses; and a good thing for the painter himself.

For five weeks, from the last days of March to the beginning of May, Ned and I lodged with Mrs. Griggs, and I worked, one

thing leading to another, every day seeing more scenes to paint: grey rocks; brown heather; great sows lying in the mud at the end of the village street; little pigs, middle-sized pigs; fowls; bumptious cockerels with red combs on manure-heaps; cows; and stone walls. Alas! there is no time in life to paint everything. To succeed one must concentrate. Here were the horses and the man, and so, with the exception of one or two side-steppings of cows being milked in stone yards, I stuck to my horses and Ned in the landscape. This picture that I started out with became my principal picture of that visit. I tried various subjects. One so often seen when a fox runs to the cliff—a grey sky, a grey sea and grey granite rocks; a mounted figure holding a horse silhouetted against the white band of surf below; the whipper-in waiting whilst the huntsman goes down the cliff for hounds which have followed the fox over the boulders to a sanctuary from where they will never get him out. I tried a huntsman riding in the valley below the hill, followed by the whole pack of hounds—a small figure in a vast landscape. Finally, I decided that my first impression would bear repeating on a larger scale. This picture, thirty-six by forty inches, painted on that same spot, of Ned riding up the hill with his hounds, was exhibited at the Academy the first year after the war, 1919, the year in which I was elected, and was bought by Connell of Bond Street, for what I thought was a huge sum—two hundred and fifty guineas. In 1945, when living at Withypool on Exmoor, I received a telegram from Colnaghi in Bond Street congratulating me on the sale of one of my pictures at an auction in Edinburgh for twelve hundred guineas. This was the picture painted at Zennor, and which had been bought originally for two hundred and fifty at the Academy in 1919.

Another picture, illustrated here, was of Ned on the grey at the top of Zennor Hill near a hoary pile of granite rocks, which those who know Zennor and the moors will easily recall if ever they read this. The picture was called "An April Fox". The whip is stationed at the top of the hill, from where he can see the country below, while lower down the hill are figures on foot, holding their hats in the air and pointing. The whip looks away into the country and the mare stands like a statue, her ears pricked. I worked looking into the April sunlight, which lit the back, loins and mane of the mare, surrounding Ned's coat with a flaming, scarlet light. Whilst in the making, this picture used to be left on the top of the hill, beneath a cavern of granite. The cool air hardened and dried the paint, and there being a spell of good weather at the time, damp only tightened the canvas and

slightly warped that staunch stretcher made in St. Ives. It was a perfect subject, which had to be done quickly, and was settled in about three mornings. I was learning a good motto: leave a picture alone and let it finish itself. This picture was also shown at the Academy in 1919 and purchased by Connell & Son of Bond Street. Two hundred guineas was the price.

Yet another picture of Ned on his grey was bought by the Newcastle Art Gallery. In this he is riding towards you, silhouetted up against the sky, and the leading hounds are coming out of the picture. Of the many reproductions made from my work, the one taken from the Newcastle picture is, I think, the most satisfactory.

This shows how those two animals paid for their keep. And Ned, who was then eighteen, was receiving good wages, a suit of clothes a year, and was happy, well-fed and comfortable. I paid for his lodgings and beer, and with the pound at its value of that day, he was not badly off.

There were many other sketches and studies made at Zennor, one with Ned on the grey mare against the sky, not in the scarlet coat but with bare arms and shirt sleeves, and riding bare-back at a fair. This was bought later for a Gallery in Australia; and after the war I finished a much larger version, begun at Zennor, called "The Grey Horse". This sold in the Academy for nine hundred guineas whilst I was in America in 1922. Good, patient Grey Tick! I have often thought of her since, and how she helped my account at the bank.

Speaking of business matters, a certain dealer in Glasgow used occasionally to write asking me to send him any works I had for sale. My favourite-sized canvas was twenty-four by twenty inches, and one of the reasons for this was that two canvases could be packed face to face, with pins in between, and flat boards on the outside. These were sent by registered parcel post, their full weight being under eleven pounds. Whenever I sent him the canvases, a cheque for fifty pounds always came back—twenty-five for each picture. This sounds a small sum to-day, but I was glad of the money. Being a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours, my six works sent there each year were sold, not for startling sums, but the prices were welcome enough at the time, and my work shown at the autumn Glasgow Exhibitions generally found a buyer. Thus I was well able to afford to keep models and go hunting on them at the same time.

More memories of Zennor: A friend of mine, Leonard Jennings, a sculptor, who afterwards joined up with the Northumberland

Hussars in the war and finally was on the staff of General Rawlinson, came down to stay with me. He was a good soul, a good horseman and a light weight, and during his stay he and I had many a ride over the moors when there was a thick fog and it was impossible to work. Great piled-up slabs of rock, lying one upon another, looking like prehistoric animals, stood out from the weather-beaten surfaces of that hill-top, taking fantastic shapes in the enveloping fog, whilst from below we heard the oft-repeated wailing sound of fog-horns from steamers finding their way along the coast. Across that strange, undulating country, to the sound of fog-horns, we chatted and rode, and on one occasion we came to a pole hung across the track from wall to wall down a drift-way between two rough enclosures. The pole may have been only about four feet high. I rode the brown mare at it, but she refused: again I tried unsuccessfully, and Jennings trotted up on Grey Tick. She made a perfect leap. After a great deal of trouble my brute followed, hitting the pole with all four feet, I landing on her neck. That night in our cosy parlour we drank to the grey in hot gin hollands and lemon, and talked of Jennings's leap until past midnight.

I must relate one more incident. On a late afternoon he and I were riding along near the edge of the tall cliffs west of Zennor, when we saw a rare thing for those days—a waiting motor-car. Coming up the track from below, out of “the roar of the sea” as one might say, was an artist, with a chauffeur behind him helping him to carry his things. I ventured to have a word with him, and discovered that he was the famous American marine painter, Dogherty. It was a strange coincidence that I should meet this much-talked-of man, then staying at the hotel at St. Ives, who was painting the rocks and the surf of the Cornish coast. Long afterwards, when in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, I stood in front of one of those very pictures of the Cornish coast by Dogherty. No wonder it was hanging in this honoured position. It was one of the best representations of boiling white surf around rocks, making patterns of jade-greens and grey, that one could ever wish to see. Such a picture could only have been done on the spot, even within reach of the spray. Dogherty was a strongly-built fellow, and watching them come up the cliff one felt that he loved the sea and had the genius and the physical strength to contend with the situation hundreds of feet below on the wet rock where he had planted his easel. There was something about this picture in the Metropolitan which could never have been achieved within the four walls of any studio. Nature had been his inspiration—he had a swift, sure hand and the seeing eye.

After the painting spell at Zennor, sad to relate—not being possessed in those days with the mad affection for horses that I have to-day—poor Grey Tick was delivered back to the farmer from whence she came, and I never saw her again.

Probably one of the best and most profitable deals I ever made in my life was when I bought a cow as a model for fourteen pounds. She was a cross between a Friesian cow and a Jersey bull, with the usual white marking on the forehead, a black neck, and her shoulder shot with dun colour. Behind her shoulder was a broad band of white, and a large pattern of black and dun, with more white on her quarters;—a most perfect model to paint, after Mr. Jory—the complacent, comfortable landlord of the Lamorna Inn—had trained her to lead on a halter. I can see the stout Jory now, the cow at one end of a long line and he at the other. The cow was careering, head down, through the orchard behind the inn, whilst he threw his sturdy weight against hers, quickly passing the line round an apple-tree, so as to bring the cow to a standstill. Finding that she was mastered and that Jory had a sieve of bran, oats and chaff, she became docile to the halter in the course of an hour or so.

My landlord at that time, a combined farmer and miller, was a Mr. Hoskins, a tall, thin man, with a black beard, wearing a half top hat, rather in the style that has become famous through being worn by Mr. Churchill. He was slightly lame, and walked with a stick, and played the harmonium at the village chapel. We both came to the agreement that he should allow the cow to be one of his herd, and that he should have the milk and the calves, whilst I could have her at any time and moment as a model.

To my mind, a cow, although perhaps not so romantic and beautiful an animal as the horse, is a better subject for the artist. This cow became friends with Mr. Hoskins's cows. She could be led, with one or two following, down to the stream or wherever I was painting her. There they would group themselves and stand quietly, peacefully chewing their cuds for hours. A pleasant way of life, painting to the sweet music of water running over stones and pebbles; the high sunlight piercing the foliage, flashing on leaf and stalk—throwing pools of light on transparent, rippling, sandy shallows. What colour there was in the running water, the reflections, the sunlit ripples; what subtle blue passages in the shadowed current! I see myself with a thirty-by-twenty-five-inch canvas—a beautiful canvas from Lanham's with a surface on which any artist would have loved to paint—working away at the two contented cows standing placidly in the stream.

With the subject in front of me, I was happiest, and here,

undisturbed in a quiet valley, I painted quick impressions of cows and stream, finally settling down to a longer exercise in paint on a fifty-by-forty-inch canvas. My picture was the black-and-white cow on the bank above me, silhouetted against strong sunlight streaming through the foliage behind; whilst near her hind feet lay her little calf, helping to make the composition. Great curving trunks of sycamore-trees going up and out of the picture were the first incentives to my design. Painted on another of Lanham's canvases, this time with an absorbent, china-clay priming, it was exhibited at the famous long-dead International Exhibition in the Grosvenor Gallery in Bond Street, and was bought by Colonel James Woods, of Ottawa, Canada. During my visit to that country I saw it in his house, looking bright and fresh as the day it was painted—a tribute to the china-clay canvases prepared in those days at St. Ives.

## I SEEK A GREY IN IRELAND

IT was, I think, in the spring of 1913 that I held an Exhibition—it may have been my first—at the Leicester Galleries in Leicester Square. The amount made at this show allowed me to receive a sum of something like eight hundred and fifty pounds—a big fortune then. This led to what might be called a small lay-out of capital. Being smitten with the hunting in that western end of Cornwall, with what were known as the Western Foxhounds, I determined to buy a grey horse. I had written to my friend, Dick Bullard, at Norwich, asking him if he could get me a good-looking, sound grey horse. Almost immediately a letter came back, which unfortunately I have failed to keep—what a letter it was!—saying he was going to Ireland to buy horses, and that by hook or by crook I must go with him—we could buy forty grey horses! I decided to go. The brown mare had been turned out to grass on a farm above the valley. How and where I arranged to meet Bullard—whether it was somewhere in London or at a London station—I do not remember, but I have not forgotten the crossing on the boat with him, staying the night in Dublin, seeing stables of horses there, and meeting a famous horse-dealer, called John Milady. It is easy to recall Milady's stable yard, his comfortable house and the man himself. With his silver-grey hair and large, smooth, Irish face, he would have passed for a judge or, better still, a bishop. Bullard made various deals in Dublin, and from there we went on to the famous Mullingar horse fair, where, in those days, one could stand and see many hundreds of horses parading the streets, yards and green. What I do recall is that I caught a bad chill, which began as a mere cold. Every house and hotel being full up, Bullard and I had to share a large double bed in a room above a butcher's shop. More horse-dealers were lodging in other rooms in the house, and we sat that night at a table with a gathering of these men, eating steak and the best fried sausages and potatoes I have ever remembered tasting in my life. What a meal! and what appetites!

The next morning, at six o'clock, with rather a "head" from drinking hot rum overnight, and in the grip of my cold, I lay in bed, whilst Bullard, like Facey Romford at Minshul Vernon, bounded out of bed in a long, calico nightgown, landing on the floor with a thud which made the room shake.



"Come on, Munnin's, let's get down to the fair," he roared.

"No, for God's sake let me lie, Dick."

"Damn it, man," he said, "you'll miss the best horses."

"I can't help that—I can't get up," I answered.

Getting into his breeches and clothes, and fastening up his leggings in less time than it takes me to write this, Bullard had gone. About 8 a.m. quick steps came along the passage, the door burst open and in came Bullard.

"My dear Sponge, there are dozens of grey horses—they are all over the fair; one a lovely sort, and another like a giraffe. Get up! and let's have breakfast."

After breakfast we went out, and I saw such a sight as I had never seen before. There had been rain, puddles were in the road, and an endless procession of horses was being led or ridden up the High Street on the left-hand side, and on the right-hand side a similar procession was coming back the other way. Behind us, at the far end of the street as I recollect, there was a wide grass green, and on this horses were being galloped and tested for their wind by prospective buyers. I stood in the streets seeing horses walk past until I became dazed. Whichever horse you wanted to look at, or consider as a purchase, you had only to hold up a hand and shout, "Hi! bay horse"—or whatever colour it was—and the man on his back would stop and pull up. This Bullard did again and again. Some horses he sent on up to the stables to be vetted, and others he allowed to pass on. He had a quick eye and, although bred in Norfolk, he had the way and manner which went down in Ireland. "Here is the grey mare I told you about," said he. "Hi! grey mare!" The fellow on her back pulled up, but it was no good—the mare was already going down to the green for a trial gallop. We stood and watched her being sent round. She was finally bought for two hundred and fifty guineas.

The outside and ambitious price which I made as a limit was one hundred and fifty pounds, and of all the greys we saw that day Bullard saw nothing to please him well enough to allow me to buy. In Dublin a few days later, after another night session at Milady's and having studied the catalogue for Sewell's Sale, which was to take place on the following morning, Mr. Milady marked one or two lots which might be worth looking at. The next day lot so and so, described as "grey mare, 15.2 hands, six years old", put into the sale by the executors of a late judge who had driven her in his brougham, was bought for me by Milady for thirty-three guineas. This left a margin out of the hundred and fifty pounds, and when some young thoroughbred horses all

from one stud came up for sale, Milady bought me another young four-year-old bay horse, St. Patrick, for which he paid thirty-five guineas. I was now the proud possessor of two horses, a bay and a dapple grey, for the sum of something under seventy guineas, just half the amount I had come prepared to pay out.

Bullard had bought sixteen horses. We returned on the boat and parted in London. Some days after my return to Cornwall I met those two horses at Penzance station. I saddled the grey mare, put a bridle on Patrick, and proudly rode along the front, up Paul Hill, ultimately arriving at Lamorna, where the faithful Ned had got two boxes ready and where we finally had time to look over those two reckless purchases. In my library at Dedham, or north room as I call it, there still hang on the wall two canvases—my first hard and careful studies of those two new models. The grey with dappled quarters and black legs is painted in low afternoon sunlight. The other study is of the bay horse, Patrick, who had no white about him, not even a white star. He stood then about 15.3½ hands and, being only four years old, he grew to be a full sixteen hands. I remember painting those studies at a place on the moors called Red House, where I kept my painting things and worked through the entire summer.

But what of the brown mare grazing in freedom on the grass of those large pastures above the valley? I determined to breed from her, using a premium sire standing at Penzance. At the beginning of the war I gave that mare in foal to the farmer where she was turned out. I could not do such a thing to-day, but a too-passionate affection for horses may become a foolish obsession.

With these two entirely fresh models, and using Red House Moor and the adjoining Trevelloe Wood as a painting-ground, I began a series of pictures. It was a new sight to see a scarlet-coated whip sitting on a dapple grey in the fir-wood, the ground carpeted with red pine-needles and bright slits of light showing in between dark stems. It was a problem; the more subtle the problem the more absorbing, and so those days used to fly.

There were rough, primitive race meetings, one on Easter Monday at St. Buryan. My first picture of a Start was inspired by that scene. At the Academy it was bought by Colonel Hall Walker, who presented it to the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

Autumn came with the first meet of the Western Hounds. I remember riding the grey mare to one of these and how Colonel Willy Bolitho, then Master, said to me, "Where do you get your horses, Munnings?" There was no doubt she was the sort they liked in Cornwall—not too large, strong, active and short in the leg.

My friend Seal Weatherby, who was then painting down there,—a good horseman like the rest of his family and an ardent follower of the chase,—was out on a useful horse. We were sitting in a grass field, with a not too high razor-banked wall in front of us. I said to Weatherby: "Give me a lead over that wall!" His horse did the trick, and my mare followed, showing us that she, like all horses from Ireland, was well experienced in jumping banks and walls. "She's a good 'un," said the Master—and so she was.

Patrick, only then rising five, was a clever horse. What long rides to distant meets and what quick runs to the cliff after the foxes we never caught, and what long rides home! A few farmers, a dealer, a butcher, a doctor or two and a lawyer made up the field—all the best of friends.

I cannot leave out of these reminiscences the story of an end to one of these hunting days, when a fox ran to the cliff. It was a late afternoon in December. A small group of dismounted followers and the huntsman, Tom Mollard, stood looking down below where a fox had gone. Somebody spotted him—a small, brown object, crouching on some high rocks close to the sea. This happened at Morvah on the north coast. The cliffs there were not steep or difficult to descend, and soon the whip, Jack, and myself had descended below, where the fox was curled up on a high rock, silhouetted against the sea behind him. Before I could stay his hand, Jack had flicked the fox with the lash of his whip, and with a sharp bark it jumped into the sea. There were we watching the fox swimming for his life, being lifted with the groundswell almost on to the rocks, and then dragged back again in the back-wash until a wave, larger than the rest, landed him safe and there he clung. As the water left him, he looked like a small greyhound, with his sodden coat close to his sides. The fox shook himself. Springing up to the next ledge, he climbed on and up, until he finally went into a wide crevice of the cliffs.

"Come on, Mr. Munnin's!" said Jack. "Let's go and get him out."

"No, Jack, we don't—that fox has run for his life, and has saved himself. We're going to leave him alone," I replied.

"Oh, we must get him out," said Jack.

I answered, "No!"

"Oh, well, what will Tom say?" he asked.

I replied that I didn't care.

When we met Tom at the top of the cliff Jack called up, "Mr. Munnin's says 'the fox has run for his life, has swum for his life and is safe, and we are not going to get him out.'"

"That's the last time we'll ever let Mr. Munnings go down after a fox," was Tom's reply.

By now twilight was falling, and, leaving the cliff, we rode to the nearest inn, had parting drinks, and Tom trotted off with the hounds, followed by some, the rest going their various ways.

Those who had stood above watching the escape of the fox agreed with my sentiments. Seeing the fox struggling in the sea below, their suspense, they told me, became almost unbearable, and they felt like shouting for joy when they saw him saved by the large wave. What would Tom Mollard have thought of this expression of human weakness in his followers of the chase?



## HAMPSHIRE HOP-PICKERS

OF all my painting experiences, none were so alluring and colourful as those visits spent amongst the gypsy hop-pickers in Hampshire each September. More glamour and excitement were packed into those six weeks than a painter could well contend with. I still have visions of brown faces, black hair, earrings, black hats and black skirts; of lithe figures of women and children, of men with lurcher dogs and horses of all kinds. I still recall the never-ceasing din around their fires as the sun went down, with blue smoke curling up amongst the trees. I think of crowded days of work—too swiftly gone. Yet, with the end of the picking and departure of the gypsies, I felt considerable relief as the last sounds of their wheels died away. These folk with importunate ways and wild habits were well enough for a time, but for no longer.

The first of those Hampshire episodes came about through a friendship with a clever woman artist, a comparatively rich lady, with a good income. This wealth did not prevent her from working strenuously at her art. Trained in the earlier days of the Orpen and John School in Chelsea, she was, I would say, one of the few people possessing the great gift to draw, and this gift she perfected in that school. She could draw anything. A wizard with the pencil—not only could she draw—she was a fine etcher, and for years was a regular exhibitor at the New English Art Club when that Club was in its best days. She was, in the quietest way imaginable, a true and generous Bohemian, and helped many people. Her London home contained a printing-press, and all the paraphernalia which goes with etching; her country home was somewhere in Hampshire. As the years went on, she became a luxurious Rambler. With a magnificent, carved and gilded caravan, drawn by two well-fed horses, and with an able attendant, she travelled about, and once followed a circus through Ireland, making a number of original drawings and etchings. It was in 1913 that I visited her at a farm near Evesham. I remember the brightly painted caravan standing in the stackyard at the farm, and the two horses grazing on a pasture.

Every year the caravan was taken to Hampshire, and for a month or six weeks she worked at a place called Binsted amongst

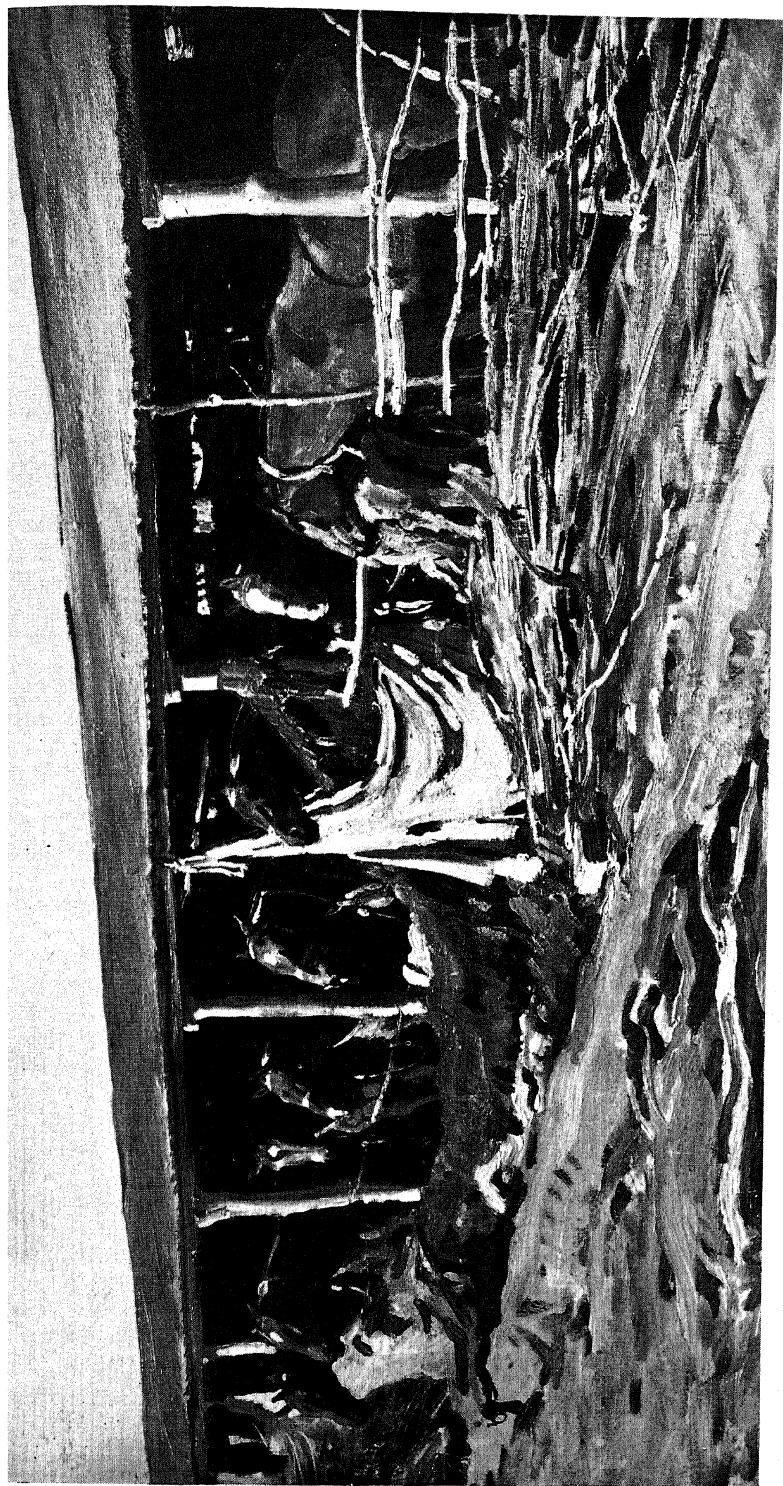
a host of hop-picking gypsies. Hop-picking usually started the last week in August or first week in September, and went on for more than a month, well into October.

My friend was going to travel down with her van and horses, over the Cotswolds, into Hampshire. I walked through part of the Cotswolds, whilst the van did somewhere about twenty miles a day. A long hill up to Chipping Campden almost defeated those two good horses pulling the caravan. With several stops it arrived in the town. A trace-horse was needed. My friend's driver had remarked on the good looks of a fine grey horse in a pasture, and on asking where a horse could be bought, he was told of a farm we had passed. Walking back, he found it was where he had seen the grey, and it was bought and paid for on the spot. Trace-gear was found at the saddler's, and next morning a start was made in style. No hill was too much for that triple team.

At Alton I took up my quarters at the Swan Hotel, meeting my friend at her inn outside the town on the Portsmouth road.

Now for the gypsies. The first morning a dark man, wearing earrings, a coloured scarf, a black felt hat, sleeved-waistcoat and tight trousers, drove up to the inn in a typical yellow-wheeled gypsy cart. Between the shafts was a strong young horse, with long, thick tail and mane; the horse was almost covered with brass-mounted harness. The man was one of the lady artist's friends and models, Mark Stevens. He told us the hop-picking would start that week and, addressing my friend as "my lady", suggested he should drive us to Binsted to see the camp. We were soon in the cart, driving along the Portsmouth road, where, by the Hen and Chickens at Froyle, we turned, right-handed, over a small stream, finally arriving in a forty-acre pasture, with a fine oak-tree in the middle. Standing along the hedges on each side were caravans of all shapes, sizes and descriptions: round, romany, bee-hive tents; old Army bell-tents. There were at least two to three hundred souls, men, women and children—not including dogs and horses—camped in this pasture. Circular patches of white wood ash were on the ground in front of each dwelling—tent or caravan—and at that moment we saw, travelling slowly round the meadow, a large farm waggon, loaded high with faggots, drawn by two cart-horses. From the top of this load a man with a fork was throwing down faggots, one by one, as the waggon passed each family. This the farmer did daily, to save the breaking of his fences and trees—hop-picking folk must have firewood!

Lurchers and greyhounds lay underneath many a vehicle,



24" x 18"

"I had been painting each patient head, with eyes blinking in the sun, and was working on the sixth." Painted at Emmenaine, 19th-21st March, 1918. See page 307.



A. J. Munro G.O.

Castle House, Dealham,  
Essex

A Merry Christmas from  
Mr & Mrs R. J. Munro 1934

*The Punch-bowl. The origin of the recipe used at the Swan Hotel, Harleston.*



travelling families of fowls were making themselves at home around the fences, and smoke from wood fires, shouts of fighting children, and barking of dogs filled the air.

Near the oak-tree in the middle of the field stood a capacious mission tent, the presence of which did not seem to have any check on the language used by men, women and children.

"I'll pull yer little lights out an' show 'em to yer!" yelled a mother to an enraged and screaming child with a dirty face.

Horses which had never been turned off together before were making friends or having kicking matches between themselves. This added to the din, for those travelling horses belonging to the gypsies could scream louder than any woman!

"Look at that something something 'orse over there; 'e'll be a-killin' that b—— pony!"

"Garn," was the reply.

Here was a fresh scene which an East Anglian would not see in Cornwall and probably not even in Kent, for these pickers mostly travelled up from Bristol and West Dorsetshire, Salisbury Plain and Herefordshire. The greater part of them were either true or very near Romany—with names like Gray, Lee, Stevens, Gregory, Loveday.

Seeing this swarming crowd of humanity and knowing that with introductions from "the Lady" I should soon find all the models I needed, I made arrangements to get my painting-things over on the following day. Standing by the stream which we had crossed before reaching the meadow was an old, thatched, disused paper-mill, adjoining a row of cottages, and there I arranged to keep canvases and materials, which, as usual, were punctually arriving from St. Ives.

I was painting these "gyppoes", as I called them, right to the end of the hop-picking. Never in my life have I been so filled with a desire to work as I was then. The families that I got to know had picturesque children, dogs and horses. The women had, somewhere in the back of each caravan, great black hats with ostrich feathers, laid away for gala days, or to be worn when selling baskets or brushes on the road. Nobody could beat their style of dress, with black silk apron over a full-pleated skirt, a pink or mauve blouse showing off a tough, lithe figure; strings of red beads, and wonderful earrings glinting under blue-black hair, came into their make-up, and sure enough, if I needed it, the large black hat—complete with ostrich feathers—was produced and worn.

Mrs. Loveday was one of the most dressy of the women, and liked being painted. It was better to paint amongst a certain set of families who, in some way or other, were related.

"Who d'ye want ter-morrer, Mr. Money?" Mark Stevens would ask. "D'ye want Mrs. Stevens, or the kids, or d'ye want Reuben, or will ye be wantin' a 'orse?"

So each evening, before washing my brushes and leaving, I had to settle in my mind which ones I was painting the next day. These I paid at the same rate as they made at hop-picking, which I believe was then about ten shillings a day. Speaking of washing brushes, it must have been for at least five weeks that I washed my brushes every afternoon, excepting Sundays, in the stream that ran under that old, disused paper-mill.

My largest canvases that year were forty by thirty-six inches. One painted amongst the hops; the other, entitled "The Departure of the Hop-pickers", is now in the Art Gallery of Melbourne, Australia.

Mrs. Loveday posed in all her finery for this picture, holding a black horse. In the centre Mark Stevens was harnessing a white horse to a blue, Romany-looking, ship-shaped caravan. Children and dogs were in the foreground. The picture had a large proportion of sky, with light, passing clouds, and was done in three consecutive mornings. All through September mellow days followed on in succession with much the same beautiful effect. The September sun never reaches anywhere near the zenith, but travels round at a lower angle, giving the long light an artist loves; a light casting long shadows which combine and help the composition. What days! What models!

The original version of "The Departure of the Hop-pickers" was brought up to my first London studio after the war, where I sold it to a collector. He bought four others and, being a business man, not long afterwards accepted an offer from a Bond Street dealer for double what he had given me. The picture "The Departure of the Hop-pickers" had cost him two hundred and fifty pounds. Doubling this, the dealer gave him five hundred, and sold it to the Melbourne Art Gallery for fifteen hundred. I made two-fifty, my patron the same and the dealer a thousand!

A much larger version of the picture, done afterwards in tempera on a white russian canvas, was hung at the Academy in 1914, and was bought by the art critic, Konody, for a gallery in Japan. I considered this an honour, for Konody knew a picture.

On the advice of my artist friend, at the end of the picking I stayed on to see the actual and real "departure of the hop-pickers". This might be described as a classic sight. It was indeed! One after another, large and small, rolling, creaking caravans, with their straining, pulling horses, came out of that meadow, turned sharp to left or right, and went on their way.

It was a morning of men shouting at horses, and an incessant rumbling away in the distance. Like a ship at sea, a caravan came pitching over the uneven ground, the father leading the horse, the wife leaning out of the half-door, holding the reins; children's faces looking over the door, some youngsters sitting on the shafts, others running behind. Poultry slung in large crates or cages between the back wheels. Heavily laden, lurching in the wake of others, and joining in the procession, taking the westward route, all caravans and carts cleared the meadow that day. Many had been leaving, but this final exodus left the scarred, wide pasture empty;—silent as the grave. There was nothing left to work for. I packed up my pictures in the old paper-mill and the next morning took them all to Alton station in a four-wheeled cab, and travelled back to Cornwall.



## THE PIPER

WRITING of the collector's sale of my pictures to the dealer reminds me that one of these was a water-colour called "The Piper", which was hung at the Academy, and which he bought for forty guineas. The collector's wife would not allow him to part with the water-colour, and the deal being a strict business one, he had to buy it back at the dealer's price of two hundred. Again the dealer scored.

"The Piper" was done in Cornwall with Norfolk memories in my mind. The central figure was a Scottish piper in kilts. The men dancing and others looking on, the horses, fair background and the Bell Inn were imaginary, and drawn from Norfolk inspirations. It might be called a nostalgic picture. This is how it started.

I was painting at the time in a large studio on a farm at Paul above Newlyn. A friend, Seal Weatherby, had looked in. The glass doors into the garden were wide open, and we heard far-away sounds entirely foreign to those parts.

"Hullo," said Weatherby, "what's that?" as we ran out into the garden. "Bagpipes!" he yelled. "He's over there; let's find him."

Off we went, through the garden into the meadow and over the first wall. Hurrying across three or four more enclosures, taking walls and banks in style, we were soon on the road leading to Paul, and still the sound of the bagpipes! We ran down the road, and behold, there was a Scottish piper in full dress, his beribboned pipes sticking out behind, his cheeks blowing. In tartan plaids, sporran, stockings and all, he was slowly patrolling along, making his skirling music. Weatherby accosted him. In broad Scotch he told us he had been in the Black Watch. There and then we persuaded him to come up the road to the studio and pose. We gave him a drink, stood him on the throne, and Weatherby, seizing a canvas, started away on a life-sized head and shoulders. I can see him now—he painted with his tongue sticking out of his mouth. I took a long-shaped canvas and painted the piper as a small figure in the middle of the picture, suggesting other figures about him. This went on all day, and the man had food and drink. He came next morning—a grand fellow, pure Scotch and an excellent model.

The canvas was completed later and bought by a doctor, who afterwards bequeathed it to the Art Gallery at Stoke-on-Trent. The water-colour was copied from this painting. After drawing every figure in pencil, all was done in direct washes, using no body-colour at all. It was a picture that went well, as artists would say.

I could not write of Cornish visits without speaking of studio parties, waltzing, musical evenings. At that time I had a weakness for reciting Edgar Allan Poe's poem, "The Raven". I knew this poem so well that I could recite it in many moods, according to the quantity or quality of the punch. At a late hour I would be asked to recite "The Raven". Having experienced so many attempts at this poem, which had always suffered from interruptions, I grew wily, and preferred not to make a start until I was quite sure that no interruptions would occur. During a Christmas season, on a night of howling wind and pouring rain, we were all congregated in the large studio where Weatherby and I had heard the sound of the bagpipes. It must have been well past midnight. Steaming punch had been served out; the atmosphere was blue with smoke; all were calling for "The Raven".

"I cannot do it," said I with insistence, "and what is more, I am not going to do it."

"But you must," they all shouted.

Finally I gave way, on the condition that there should be no interruptions and perfect silence. There was a good fire in the open hearth. Shaded oil-lamps were used then. These were turned down to get the right effect. My brain responded to the right amount of punch—I had taken just enough and not too much. I was ready to start. Many readers will know the opening lines of that poem:

Once upon a midnight dreary  
Whilst I pondered weak and weary  
Over many a quaint and curious  
Volume of forgotten lore.  
Whilst I nodded, nearly napping,  
Suddenly there came a tapping!

And there was a tapping! Someone was knocking at the door—nor merely knocking, but banging. In this tense atmosphere which I myself had partly created we all sat there—spellbound! I broke the spell myself, saying:

"For God's sake, go to the door, somebody."

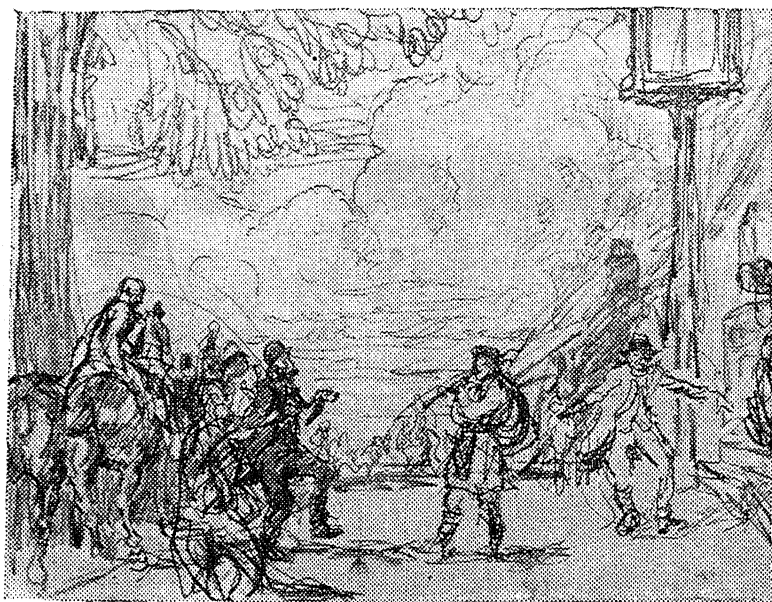
The lamps were turned up, and behold, there stood the land-

lord of the Lamorna Inn, Mr. Jory. He had come for the Lamorna party with old black Bess and the Lamorna waggonette. Jory, in tarpaulin sou'-wester and oilskins, the rain pouring off him, stood there, a wet, shining figure, every part of him reflecting the light. Raindrops hung from his moustache, his nose glistened, his cheeks glistened.

"Come in, Mr. Jory," somebody called out.

"Let me put the mare away first—it's pouring with rain," replied he.

Having done this, Jory stripped off his oilskins in the kitchen, joined the company, swallowed a tumblerful of punch and sat down. Then, with a final shifting of chairs and one more round of punch, the company settled again, and I made a final effort, reciting the poem through to the end without interruptions, which had never happened before and will never happen again.



## WORKING IN CORNWALL

THE first artist to settle at Lamorna was the famous John Birch—known as Lamorna Birch. This genial inhabitant of the valley lived right at its far end, up above the cove and quay. His square house looked out across the sea, standing half-way up the cliff to the right of the small bay. His studio was below on the banks of his beloved stream. When he was not painting he was fishing; when he was not fishing he was painting. If he was not fishing or painting in Cornwall, then he would be doing the same on the Tweed—a pleasant way of life which made him happy. He was never downhearted, and could beat everyone at an evening party with his Lancashire songs. A few artists had made their homes in the valley.

Every Saturday night we foregathered at the house of Hughes; we looked forward to these weekly meetings, which went on without a break.

Laura and Harold Knight worked in Newlyn. There, in a low, whitewashed sail-loft, with a skylight, Mrs. Knight—Dame Laura now—painted pictures which made the rest of us sit up. Two—one of boys bathing in Newlyn Harbour, the other of children flying a kite—caused a stir at the Academy, and were bought for South Africa, the one going to the Cape Art Gallery, the other to Johannesburg. Here was a great artist who never ceased working. She possessed the energy of six; the studies for her larger pictures were wonderful. It was through her that I used china-clay canvases. Laura Knight could paint anything, be it a small water-colour or a nine-foot canvas. Seeing is believing. I myself have seen her attacking these larger canvases out of doors, and when she started there was no going back. Things happened. Later on, both Laura and Harold rented large, newly-built studios higher up the valley at Lamorna, and there she tackled the most difficult tasks.

Stanhope Forbes, the famous leader of the original Newlyn School, had a pleasant house and studio at Paul, above Newlyn, and other artists lived in and around Newlyn Town.

A younger set was for Roger Fry and futurism. The particular fashion in modern art at that time was painting figures as though cut out of pale yellow boxwood, their joints working like those of

a wooden doll. Nothing shook the confidence of this small company. If any ordinary painters paid a visit and were shown their "masterpieces", it was condescendingly explained to them why they were painted and what they meant.

This rather warm element gave parties and set the pace in the Art Colony. Imagine a long, low, top-lit sail-loft, converted into a studio, as so many were at Newlyn and St. Ives, its real use and purpose in the world ended. No more brown sails and straight, long spars. Instead, a vast white damask table-cloth spread on the floorboards, its centre-piece a great pile of fruit—gilded melons, gilded pineapples, gilded grapes and vine leaves. There were dishes of food and troops of wine-bottles, full and empty. In a blue haze of cigarette smoke, Roman revellers reclined on cushions around the feast on the floor. Japanese lanterns swung from the rafters and lit up the scene. Lovely, voluptuous, reclining women smoking cigarettes in long holders. Amateurs and students, they were rather more competent in the art of seductive make-up than in the art of painting. Their own attractive figures were totally unlike the strange shapes they put on canvas. When art ceases to flourish in Newlyn, who will occupy those old sail-lofts? Whoever comes and goes, and whatever the fishing, the sea will remain.

Lamorna folk saw little of the Newlyn Colony; the hills and distance between were too much. A waggonette and horse, owned and driven by Mr. Jory of the Lamorna Inn, made a weekly journey from Lamorna to Penzance. The longest and worst of hills in the west led down into Newlyn, its steepness defying any motor-car of the day that faced it. Toiling up Paul Hill on foot was a long and weary pull. If riding to the blacksmith's at Penzance, I always led my horse down that hill-without-end, but I was glad to ride up it.

Whilst Christmas parties, studio gatherings and waltzing went on, we little thought of War. In August 1914 much of the work and all the play were suddenly at an end. There came a time when an artist dared not be seen sketching out of doors in the country. He might have been reported as a spy!—and out-of-door painting without a permit was practically forbidden. I had gone to London, and found the whole Chelsea Arts Club in a ferment. Men joining up in the Artists' Rifles, and drilling with broom-sticks. We all went to recruiting-stations, where thousands stood in queues, though older men were left until later. The war being in its early stages, I went with an Australian artist on another visit to Hampshire for the hop-picking. Nothing



seemed to have altered. The same families, the same horses, the same noise, as though no war at all were going on. Painting in that big pasture day after day we saw long trains with drawn blinds passing to Southampton. These trains, everybody said, were full of Russian troops, landed in Hull and going to France!

A friend of mine lived in the village of Chawton, near Alton. One day he came over in a large new Rolls driven by a liveried chauffeur, and seriously discussed with me in this field of gypsies the idea of going down to Winchester, to the headquarters of the Hampshire Carabineers or Yeomanry, where we thought we might be able to enlist. Calling for me in the Rolls the next day, we found the headquarters of the Carabineers, who were shortly sailing for India. In the usual room, in the presence of a sergeant and others, we were examined by the doctor. My friend had a silver tube in his stomach for a duodenal ulcer, and I was blind in my right eye. I asked the doctor in uniform if I couldn't be a farrier. His reply was that they could not teach artists to be farriers. In my ignorance, I even told them I had two good, sound horses, and offered these (hoping, perhaps, that I should not be parted from them), but they didn't want me or my horses. I was blind in my right eye, and the reason, they explained, why a man with one eye was rejected from such a regiment was that if anything happened to his single optic he would be blind. I had been through these examinations before. So with my duodenal friend I returned to Chawton, and afterwards to the inn and went on painting the gypsies.

Here is a sequel to the attempt to enlist in the Hampshire Yeomanry. The very next day, whilst painting in the field, a telegraph boy on a bicycle handed me a telegram. It was from Ned, telling me that both horses had been taken for the Army and sent to the Union Hotel stables in Penzance. This was a bad shock. I left my painting friend and my pictures that afternoon and took train to London. Sleeping in the Chelsea Arts Club that night, I caught the Riviera Express next morning, arriving at Penzance in the evening. Going straight to the house of the man who was commandeering the horses—a friend of mine—all strung up and full of my trouble, I explained to him how the day before I had tried to enlist at Winchester, showed him my rejection papers, and told him that these two horses were my models—were my living—and that if I could not get a war job, I should go on painting them.

"After all, you have collected many horses, and surely you can spare these two," I pleaded.

"Don't say a word—come on," he replied.

We went through the dark street—it was getting late—to the stable yard of the Union Hotel. He unlocked the stables where my two horses were standing, and, hearing my voice, Patrick neighed. In adjoining boxes there stood these two poor creatures. I do not remember ever feeling anything so keenly as when I found them shut up there awaiting—what sort of future? This dear, kind man said:

"Well, let's see; they came with bridles."

We soon found a halter for one and a bridle for the other. Leading them both out, he helped me on to the grey mare, and handed me the halter of the other horse. With many, many heartfelt thanks, and riding bareback on the grey mare and leading Patrick, I went out through the streets of Penzance the whole way to Lamorna in the pitch dark, with the rain starting, as usual. Finally arriving at the meadows above Lamorna where the two horses had been turned out, I found the iron gate, opened it, and released the two victims, who at once went off, full split, round the field in sheer joy.

Ned, who had been getting bracken for winter forage, was delighted to see the horses back. I left him the next day, caught the train to Paddington, and soon was again painting in that forty-acre field in Hampshire.

After all this, my next examination was in the dreary barracks at Bodmin in Cornwall, where we went through the same routine with the same results. The sergeant clapped a card in front of each eye in turn, telling me to read the letter on a board, the doctor saying, "The fellow's blind in his right eye"; and I was put on what was known as the Derby Scheme, C3.

Somewhere in the back of my mind is a recollection of Ned's purple complexion. Although a healthy lad, he was supposed to have an imperfection somewhere in the region of his heart. Later, as the war went on and he became of military age, he, like everybody else, had to go to Bodmin Barracks for examination, and, to my surprise, and his, was sent back as C3. That it was something to do with his heart was quite true, and this must have been why he had a purple face!

For the time being I carried on with my work. Why it should be I do not know, but it seems that in a war everybody gets down to it and works twice as hard as in peace time. This state of things at last came to an end. Ned was called up for some job or other, and I went out to St. Erth, beyond Penzance, where there appears to be the only flat marshland in that part of Cornwall, and excellent grazing. I saw Mr. Rogers, who farmed a lot

of land in the district, and although he asked a large sum weekly for the two horses, I settled to take them over there and leave them with him. Like many others, I never dreamt that the war would go on and on. And so, one sad day, riding the grey and leading the bay, I journeyed to St. Erth and put the horses to keep with Mr. Rogers, happy in the knowledge that he had a big acreage for grazing cattle, and no other horses except his own.

During my final talk with him I asked him to send the mare in the early spring to whichever premium thoroughbred sire might be sent down to the district. There being no signs of the war ending, this mare went each year to a different thoroughbred stallion. Her first foal was a brown mare by a horse called Kano—a good-looking horse, of which I had made drawings in the Union stables. The second foal was a grey by a horse called Adulah; and the third—because Mr. Rogers thought I was never coming home and he would get something more saleable—was by a three-parts-bred cart-horse stallion used by the farmers in that district.

After what seemed an endless period of war years, a kind-hearted lady friend, whom I had met in various Remount Depots during the war, went down to Penzance and in the most capable way, with my instructions and cheque, found Mr. Rogers on the St. Erth farm. She arranged the boxing of these five horses from Penzance to Ardleigh Station near Colchester—a station near my newly-bought home—Castle House—where I was then settling in; the very house in which I am now writing, and where I have lived since 1919. This is another of those superlatives where I have said I shall never forget such and such a scene, but I am sure that the arrival of these horses on that station platform all safe and sound was a sight that gave me a great thrill which I shall never forget. My cheque to Mr. Rogers was formidable—I had already sent him various sums—but nothing mattered. I was in my new home; the war was over; and Patrick and the grey mare with her two daughters and son were all with me.

## PAINTING GENERAL SEELY

**A**FTER seeing the last of my beloved horses, I was left disconsolate, and continued in my efforts to get a commission or job with the Remounts. All sorts of strange people who had never seen a horse seemed to be getting into that branch of the Army. I had written to my friend Cecil Aldin, who, besides being Master of the South Berkshire Hounds, was a Depot Remount officer. A letter came back from him, "Come at once".

I went to Purley, near Reading, to meet Cecil Aldin, where he was then living. I had never met him before. A quick, decisive sort of man, slightly ginger, with a scrubby moustache, he held the rank of Major, and looked the part in his uniform. He was in charge of horses which were spread all over the district, and thousands more were coming in from Canada every week.

I was placed in a village near the Bath Road, close to Calcot Park. Every barn was used and hung with poles or bales, separating the horses where they stood in rows. Calcot Park itself was full of Canadian Artillery horses at grass. From then on I lived amongst thousands of horses. It was a common thing for us to meet trainloads of them at Theale or Pangbourne stations.

These useful horses, called "gunners", were all very much the same stamp—a half-bred Percheron—and they ran mostly in three colours, the predominant colour being black; many were dapple grey and a few chestnuts. It was sad to think of their probable fate in the war. Batch after batch were landed, fed, looked after and sent off. Those with lice were treated with gas-water, brought from Pangbourne or Reading gas-works.

For some months I was lodged at a farm opposite Calcot Park. The farmer's name was Hill. Being under-staffed—his labour taken from him—he was milking his cows long after dark. A sultry summer's day had ended in a yet more sultry night with flickering lightning and distant thunder. I stood outside watching the display. With each flash more vivid than the last, every ancient oak in the park was silhouetted against the dazzling glare. Heavy drops of rain began to fall. A blinding light, a deafening crash and a deluge of rain drove me into the house. And the milking was still going on! To the sounds of the storm I com-

posed the following song or ballad for the house, and sang it to Hill and his wife when he came in.

“There’s the bottle,” said I, “take a drink.”

We all took one, and sang as the sounds of the storm died away:

The day is done, the fowls are fed,  
The children fast asleep in bed;  
In the dreary west the sun hath set;  
But Brother Hill he milketh yet,  
He milketh yet, he milketh yet.

The twilight draws across the park,  
The cowhouse now grows deadly dark  
And filled with shadows black as jet,  
But Brother Hill he milketh yet,  
He milketh yet, he milketh yet.

The lamp is lit in the dining-room,  
The bats are wheeling in the gloom,  
The mushrooms grow, the grass is wet;  
But Brother Hill he milketh yet,  
He milketh yet, he milketh yet!

The supper waits, the kitchen clock  
Goes ticking on, tick-tock, tick-tock;  
Each pale white face with fear is set;  
But Brother Hill he milketh yet,  
He milketh yet, he milketh yet!

The night is dark; the ghosts are out,  
The rain pours down like a waterspout;  
This fearsome night we’ll ne’er forget;  
But Brother Hill he milketh yet,  
He milketh yet, he milketh yet!

The thunders roar, the lightnings leap,  
And strike the cowhouse in a heap;  
Whilst on my brow is a clammy sweat.  
But Brother Hill he milketh yet,  
He milketh yet! he milketh yet!

Even the large barn of Brother Hill’s Ford Farm, as it was called, was finally taken over and filled with horses, as were all the other available barns in the neighbourhood.

There were days when we were allowed to take a Canadian charger out with Aldin and the hounds. He was a good amateur huntsman.

This at last came to an end. Paul Konody, the art critic on the *Daily Mail* and *Observer*, had been given the job by the Canadian Government of selecting artists to go out to France and paint Canadian War Records. John had already gone with the rank

of major. Orpen and others were with the British Army. Richard Jack was sent to the Canadians, whilst I was chosen to go to the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, which was under the command of General Seely, who later became Lord Mottistone. Little did I know what a man I was going to meet when I landed in France and began my portrait of the Brigadier-General.

I was met at Boulogne by a Canadian officer. All my painting materials and kit were put in the car, and I was taken to Hesdin. These belongings which I had brought with me had been packed in as small a space as possible. A light, narrow box was made to hold three stretchers, one thirty by twenty-five, and two twenty-four by twenty, and a quantity of rolled-up pieces of canvas, cut to fit the stretchers. Later on this trusty box was to serve me well through more than one awkward situation.

Arriving at Hesdin, I stayed a day or two in a small château with the Canadian representative, General Simms, and there awaited orders until I was taken by another officer in a Cadillac car to General Seely, who was then stationed with part of the brigade near the front line, at a place called Small Foot Wood; but there was no sign of a wood—only charred stumps of trees standing in desolate wastes of mud with duck-boards about, leading to dug-outs. I was taken to the staff dug-out, where I met General Seely himself, and he arranged there and then that I should paint him on his horse, Warrior, the next morning.

In that underground dug-out I had my first taste of a staff dinner, and General Seely's Irroy brand of champagne, which he got out only on special occasions because he said, "Irroy made you laugh." His brigade major at that time was Geoffrey Brooke, famous with his horses in the Army high-jumping competitions—Brooke was a great horseman. The General's aide-de-camp was Prince Antoine of Orleans. Being in some distant way, so I understood, heir to the French Throne, he could not serve in the French or English Army, and so was captain in the Royal Canadian Dragoons. There was Torrance, who was the staff-captain, and others who made up the table, and probably a young visiting lieutenant or two, whom the hospitable brigadier had asked in to dine and play bridge.

The next morning I saw the General wandering about in a thick, tan-coloured sort of camel-hair suit of pyjamas. He warned me that the sitting would be short, and after breakfast, in the brilliant light of the low January sun, with a frost on the ground, myself standing on a duck-board, so that I should not sink into the mud, the General posing on Warrior ten yards away in the right light, I began my portrait. After the first quarter of

an hour my sitter looked at his wrist watch, and said, "Quarter of an hour gone!" I said, "Yes, sir," and worked away, using a little copal varnish in a small dipper to set the paint as I worked on that red countenance glistening in the sun. General Seely for some reason or other always made me think of the Peninsular War—he belonged to the Wellington period. Sitting there on his charger, in general's uniform, on a cold, still day, with a long, brown, woollen muffler thrown once round his neck, Jack Seely was a picture. He sat on no wooden horse, as many of my sitters had done in civilian life—he was on the patient Warrior, who, as the minutes went on, sank deeper and deeper into the mud, until his fetlocks were covered.

As I have said before, war makes everybody work. A little before lunch, Seely said:

"Have you finished?"

"Well, sir, I hope I have."

"I must get off—I've a lot to do," he said.

Already officers were calling to see him on this matter and that. His batman then got on the horse, and I worked at Warrior's portrait.

After lunch, days being short, I was out again. This time, so that I could complete the painting of the coat with the orders on the left breast, his batman sat on the horse, wearing the General's coat and cap. Officers coming to the dug-out and passing the batman dressed as a general sitting on a horse, not realising who it was, unconsciously gave the salute, which pleased the batman no end! At 4 p.m. the portrait as a rough sketch was complete. Later on, down below at dinner, the General and the mess approved. The former got out some of his claret for the artist!

I must tell of Warrior's stabling. With another horse, he was standing a little way off up a slope, beneath a tilted covering on poles fixed near a mud bank. A strange place to house horses. When led out in the morning, with clean saddles, spick and span, and well-fed, it was "one up" to the groom who looked after them.

After making other sketches at Small Foot Wood, I was taken back to Hesdin, and from there sent on to a place called Berneville, near Longchamps. This was the "back area", where regiments and horses of the Brigade were situated. I was billeted with some of the staff in a doctor's house, and here I began work in earnest.

Torrance, the staff-captain, on seeing the General's portrait, was out to help in every way. "What is it you want this morning?" he would ask, and if it were a picture of a regiment on the

march—the Fort Garrys or Strathconas—a troop with a corporal, all in full marching order, was sent out to a quiet road, and would pose there as models for a morning. This man or that would occasionally get off his horse to see what I was doing. As the picture took shape, and each trooper saw the portrait of his steed in the picture, the interest grew.

“He’s got your old horse, Bill!”

Two or three more would come to look, and stamp their feet to get warm, and then mount again. Indeed, the war made one work; but what a chance for an artist! Day after day with all the models I needed and all becoming interested. Besides, to them it was something new—seeing on the canvas actual portraits of themselves which they could recognise and joke about. I can generally get on with most people, and certainly could get along with these Canadians. They were the finest and best fellows that I have ever met.

Two or three miles out a stream ran at the bottom of a valley, between hills dotted with dark juniper-bushes. Here they watered the horses, and to help me paint a subject of watering on the march, a troop was sent down to the valley, where they posed for the picture. Some fetched water in canvas buckets, whilst others held the horses, showing how a whole line was watered. This was probably one of my best attempts, and I remember, when the forty-five pictures were exhibited in Gallery IX at the Royal Academy Exhibition of the Canadian War Records, seeing Professor Tonks, of The Slade, taking a long, critical look at this particular painting. It was full of work, which went on for three or four mornings of fine weather.

A batman drove me each day to the spot in the doctor’s low-hooded gig, drawn by a Canadian Artillery horse.

Prince Antoine interested himself in my paintings. As each one was completed and taken off its stretcher, so that I could have the same stretcher free for the next canvas, he used to pin them to the walls of the mess-room. Not a flattering way to hang pictures, but they were passed by the critical eye of the staff, and were drying at the same time.

The collection grew until, early in March, the whole brigade got on the move and marched off through districts of desolation and destruction. We rode through villages and towns where not a house was left intact. All that remained were mounds of rubble, broken walls and the stark ruins of a church, its solid Norman arches still standing—a monument to the builders of the past. Peronne, Cambrai and other towns in the Somme district looked as if shattered by an earthquake. We met other



cavalry regiments returning to the back area, and once, passing through Peronne on a cold, grey day with fine flakes of snow scattering in the air, we met an Indian Cavalry Division. As we rode by, we saw their sad, swarthy, bearded faces beneath the great turbans, all looking melancholy in the cold northern spring, away from their Indian climate. At one of our stopping places I made pencil portraits of some of them. Smiling sadly, each signed his rude signature below. The drawings are still in one of my sketch-books of the war.

One of these marches brought us out of the forlorn, devastated area into a rich country untouched by war. I was riding with the signal officer not far behind the General, when he pulled up and said:

"Would Munnings care to give his horse to the trumpeter and come with me in my car?"

Dismounting, I joined General Seely, who was sitting on a low bank by the roadside talking with an old French peasant. His car was standing a few paces away. Leaving the peasant, he stood in the road and saw the brigade pass, taking the salute. When the brigade had gone, with a few words to the old Frenchman, General Seely got into the car, and I sat by his side. We were driven away, catching up and passing the brigade, finally landing at a magnificent château. As we rolled up to a great flight of stone steps, there at the top was Torrance, the staff-captain, bareheaded, with arms folded, standing against one of the great columns of the portico.

"What a fellow he is!" said Seely. "Now we shall be in comfortable quarters!"

The host of this Château, at Davenescourt, somewhere on the Somme, was in residence. He was a Vicomte, and his family name Villeneuve, if I remember rightly. During that short stay the brigade band played in the outer hall, whilst the staff dined with the Vicomte in the larger hall at a big, circular table. Sir William Orpen, who had been painting Marshal Foch, was at the château, and joined us at dinner.

This pleasant interlude was a lull before the storm. One morning after breakfast, whilst General Seely, Brigade-Major Geoffrey Brook, Orpen and myself were reclining in the sun on the sloping lawn, Seely remarked, "This is my Ecole des Beaux Arts"; for Orpen was painting him in a large upstairs bedroom each morning, whilst below I was painting Prince Antoine on a black horse in the sunlight. I think Orpen has mentioned this in his own book of memoirs; he also speaks of how I borrowed some pointed sable brushes from him. At one of those dinners

he was sitting next to me, and, after drinking old brandy, he made a drawing of me in my large sketch-book. This drawing in some mysterious way got lost at a publisher's, and I finally found it standing, framed, on the library mantelpiece at Clevedon.

I think it was at the end of this particular dinner that General Seely, in the most wonderful French, got up and proposed the health of the Vicomte Villeneuve, the owner of the Château. In his speech he alluded to the war, hoping the end was in sight, and all the rest of it. The pleasant, bald-headed, black-bearded host stood up and responded in his best manner. The very next morning there was a great stir; orders came through for the brigade to march and go on towards Ham. My portrait of Prince Antoine could not travel—it was still wet, as I had plastered on a lot of paint when finishing off the columns and steps of the Château which made the background of the portrait. The Vicomte expressed his willingness to take care of the portrait, and it was left behind in the Château.

Very soon we were leaving this rich and pleasant country behind us, and again were passing through areas of desolation and destruction.

Taxing my memory, I recall that we arrived at a place called Ennemain, which existed only in mounds and rubble. It was near another village that had disappeared in the same way, called Athies. In this place all were living in dug-outs or Nissen huts. I was sharing one of these huts with a brigade interpreter, Baron Roulleaux Dugage, who became a great friend of mine. In those days we slept mostly in our clothes because the long-expected German attack was drawing nearer every day. Dugage lay stretched straight out on his back on his camp bed, in boots, breeches and leggings, with his toes turned upwards like a figure on a tomb, his hands crossed on his chest, and his cap right over his face, with the peak resting on his nose. How on earth he slept in this manner I do not know! I was never able to have a talk with him on any subject, for the baron was always asleep. "Let me sleep, Monnings!" and he slept.

One night General Seely had come into the mess after dining with General Harman, who, I believe, commanded a Cavalry Division, saying that Harman had told him that two Alsatian deserters had come over and said the German attack would start on 21st March, after so many hours' shelling and so many hours' gas. This had remained in my mind, and in the early hours of the morning, not daring to disturb the interpreter, who was stretched out in that same position on his camp bed, I lay trembling in fear. I heard the most awful sounds approaching along the

road; it seemed as though all the heavy guns in creation were grinding along towards us.

"Dugage!" I called.

No reply.

"Roulleaux! Wake up!"

"What ees eet, Monnings, what ees eet?"

"German guns coming down the road—can you hear them?"

"Let me sleep—I don't care what is coming," said Dugage.

I could do nothing with the man! Pulling on my boots and getting into my Burberry, I walked out into the cold, foggy dawn towards the road. The noise was appalling! Coming along was a procession of British tractors! They had been at work reclaiming the trench-and-shell-devastated area. Following these came ranks and ranks of soiled and tired German prisoners, who had also been at work in the same area.

I went back into the hut. Dugage was still asleep; but he did not stay there long, for now the whole air reverberated to the incessant din of the German bombardment, which had begun at the hour the Alsatian deserters had told of. It became a background to all our doings; it went on, and on, and on, in the distance for hours.

The brigade had a band, and during the fine days that preceded the German attack in March 1918, morning after morning I would be painting in the horse lines to the dreamy strains of old tunes of the last generation. On that particular morning, with the band playing, I was finishing a picture of the horses as they stood with their heads out, basking in the sun, between tattered camouflage hanging over roughly-built rows of stabling. I had been painting each patient head, with eyes blinking in the sun, and was working on the sixth, which might have been somewhere to the right of the middle of the picture, when suddenly something was happening—men were running; a sergeant came along, saying: "Hurry up, lads! Saddle up and stand to!" The order went along the lines, and soon those patient horses were saddled up in full marching order, mounted, and the whole brigade rode away. I still have a drawing in a sketch-book of one of the horses standing ready in full marching order to go—where? And what was his end?

Torrance came along to me and said:

"Munnings, you'll have to pack up all your stuff and go along with 'B' Echelon."

Later he said: "Can't you do something about your uniform?"

I finally borrowed a serge, Sam Browne belt and tin hat from

the brigade veterinary captain, a French Canadian named Joe Duhault. Wearing the tin hat, a captain's coat and the usual breeches and leggings, I was prepared for the march.

Describing those days of continual riding I should not forget to mention the horse I rode. I had ridden various horses, but finally settled on a black Australian-bred horse, a waler, which belonged to an Indian unit, and had been caught running loose at Cambrai. This charming horse could canter in slow paces all day long. He was a deep-girthed, short-backed animal, with a kind temperament; I have never ridden a better hack.

On this particular march from Ennemain I was joined by another companion, a lieutenant named Bill Ritchie, who called himself a "camp follower". He had been sent to the brigade in charge of men with eighty-five horses of the Essex Yeomanry, which had been de-horsed. Before he and his men could rejoin their regiment, the order had come for our brigade to march. His men could not get back to their unit, and marched with the Canadians.

This is what happened to the Essex Yeomanry lorry which was to have taken Ritchie and his men back.

I heard Torrance storming away at the bandmaster: "Put your men into the units!"

"What shall we do with the instruments?" asked the bandmaster.

"The instruments! Put them all in the empty lorry which came with the Essex Yeomanry," replied Torrance, and soon after that "B" Echelon were on the march.

I was now an imitation captain, wearing a tin helmet and riding side by side with the veterinary, Joe Duhault. This march took us along through Ham, already in the range of the shelling. Tobacconists in the town were standing at crossways giving away boxes of cigarettes to troopers as they rode past, and mingling with the procession on the roads were waggon-loads of French furniture, with mattresses, and even rabbits, on the top. Cows were being driven along the road, and farther on we saw a division of cavalry, which included the Scots Greys, whose horses had been camouflaged with Condyl's fluid. Many of these men had fowls and dead pigs hanging on their saddles. We were in one vast retreat!

## THE BENT SWORD AND SCABBARD

IN that fateful March of 1918 there was a fine spell of hot weather which lasted for weeks. Each morning a thick, impenetrable mist favoured the German advance, whilst our cavalry fought rearguard actions all day. The roads in places were blocked, hampering the retreat. We were passing through a peaceful country of blossoming orchards and wide stretches of new, green corn.

At Noyon piles of cigarettes were again being handed to the troops and to the men in waggons and lorries as they passed. During a march I always rode with the veterinary, Captain Duhault, and the Signal Troop. Once at a halt the captain and I tried to get some refreshment at a small café. The Frenchwoman behind the counter said she had nothing and was leaving.

"You can go through that door and help yourselves to cider," she added.

And there through the door in the cowhouse, where the patient cows were still chewing their cud, stood great barrels and vats of rough cider. We turned on a tap and helped ourselves to this strong, sour stuff. Outside we soon felt its cheering effects, and stepping briskly across the road to our horses, I saw my black waler rolling on his back on the grass verge, with the Yorkshire batman trying to get him on to his feet. The horse, shaking himself with a grunt as he got up, seemed to say, "I've enjoyed this nice roll on the grass."

"Look at the sword!" I said.

It had been bent out of the straight in its scabbard through the horse rolling on it.

"That's nowt," said the Yorkshireman, and undoing the buckles he took the sword in its scabbard off the saddle and smote it hard upon the ground again and again, until the weapon was straightened out.

With the cider working, we gaily mounted, and rode on, the captain wishing he could meet a German, and not caring for all the stray shells which now and again passed screaming high up overhead.

As the days went on, the German advance swept over this beautiful country, untouched as yet by the war.

We learned later that the Vicomte who had been our host at the large château during that short lull before the storm had lost everything—château, estate, cattle and Percheron horses—and had fled to Paris. Being a Royalist at heart, he had taken the picture of Prince Antoine with him. This was finally collected through the Ministry of Information and taken to London.

During these uncertain, chaotic days, Bill Ritchie, my Essex farmer friend of the Essex Yeomanry, still calling himself a "camp follower", was another companion on the march. We were no longer sleeping in any kind of house; a bed of dried beans in a loft was a luxury, but it was not at all pleasant to lie there and hear the sound of the German Gothas droning overhead. They were bombing the bridge crossing the river at Choisy-au-Bac. It being a bright moonlight night, and Ritchie and I getting no rest up in the loft, we went down the ladder out into the moonlit road to see what was happening and how near the bridge the bombs were falling. It was as clear as day, and we walked to within a hundred yards of that bridge. The sky seemed full of aeroplanes; yet we saw none. That the bombers missed the bridge, which was still safe in the morning, was a miracle!

Bombs had been falling with heavy thuds all around the low-lying marsh for at least an hour. But that little town on the river suffered later on, for the next night we saw the distant glow of fires in the direction where the town lay. Noyon, which we had passed through days before, had suffered in the same way, and when staying in Chantilly painting race-horses many years later, I took a car to that country and could scarcely recognise Choisy-au-Bac. It was the same with the other places, and I often wondered whether Davenescourt and its Château fared likewise, because, of all the picturesque and paintable villages that I saw in France, this was perhaps the best. How well I remember one beautiful evening, after work, when Orpen and I explored its high street and old houses, looking at the river, the reeds, and the tall poplar-trees. Both of us swore that at the first opportunity when the war was over we would come back to that place and paint. This was one of the many good intentions never carried out!

For days we were in a large forest, sometimes moving on, sometimes resting. It was there that my Canadian friend, Duhault, taught me how to sleep using a saddle as a pillow. We were in the midst of trees and horse-lines for miles around, and after much talk at night we would finally fall asleep to the sound of horses eating hay.

I remember going through a part of Compiègne; and, passing along the street by the railway station, for a while we seemed to

be riding over coarse salt, which was really powdered glass of the destroyed railway station!

Occasionally we messed in some small house in the village, hearing tales from this officer and that about the fighting. General Seely, pulling my leg, would tell the others with a serious face that if the brigade were captured, "Munnings, in his false uniform, would most certainly be put up against the first wall and shot."

On one occasion, standing on a bridge with the General, I was drawing a crowd of horses being watered in the stream below: a suspicious French gendarme approached and said to Seely:

"*Qui est-il?*" pointing at me.

"*Il est un Boche!*" replied the General.

This piece of fooling might have been serious had not the gendarme a sense of humour and understood from the General that I was an artist with the brigade, whom, as soon as possible, he was going to send back to Headquarters. I myself was not particularly anxious to leave all this excitement, but I gathered that the staff-captain felt that I was an extra responsibility. Thus one evening, after mess in a house in a very long village street, my belongings all safely packed and placed in a large Cadillac car, the General gave me some despatches, and I left in charge of his chauffeur. I was to deliver the despatches to General Simms, the Canadian representative, who, it was supposed, was still in Hesdin.

After all these months of stirring scenes I felt the separation from friends with whom I had ridden on the march. I thought also of my black horse and Yorkshire batman.

The journey had its risks. Before coming to a town we were held up by a long pole barrier across the road, where we were questioned by the guards and where each time we had to show our papers. This difficulty at Beauvais was not so easily overcome as at other places; the French sergeant and his men were doubtful as to who I was. But in the end, with the help of the chauffeur, whose French was better than mine, we were again on the road, and in the early hours of the morning arrived at a village on this side of Abbeville, where we rested a while. At the market place in Abbeville itself the engine of the Cadillac burst into flames, which the chauffeur put out with his overcoat. This mishap again held us up. I went to all sorts of Headquarters, being sent from this place to that, endeavouring to get a lorry to take us in tow to Hesdin.

After an interminable search, having met a colonel who was going to send us a lorry, I returned to the market place, where I found the chauffeur with the car engine running again. In some

shop he had got the kind of wire he wanted, which did the trick. Again we were on the road.

Arriving at our ultimate destination, and being the bearer of despatches, I sought the headquarters of the Canadian representative in France, but not a soul was there! We were told that they had gone to Paris-Plage—that everybody was leaving.

Covering more miles of French roads, we at length found ourselves at the front door of a house on the sea-front of Paris-Plage. Next door to it was a choice-looking restaurant, called "La Cigale". My despatches were delivered. I was welcomed by General Simms and his staff, who had thought that they were never going to see me again; I was their responsibility. It was through them that I had reached General Seely in the first instance, and it was through them that I received messages from time to time from London ordering me home. This first night, away from the risks of war, was celebrated by a champagne dinner next door.

For weeks I had not slept in a bed between sheets. My slumbers led to the wildest dreams—I dreamed I was again in the retreat; that I was in a ditch with a baggage-waggon on top of me, and in my nightmare I awoke, heaving and striking at the bottom or side of what I thought was an overturned baggage-waggon. In my fright I gave a desperate heave, which was followed by an awful crash. The door opened, and there stood my late dining companions, not full of consternation, but in fits of laughter. These wits, after I had fallen asleep, had placed another box-spring mattress so that one end of it rested on the bottom of my bedstead and the other at the top end, leaving me, untouched, sleeping peacefully underneath. On the top of the mattress they had then piled chairs and every piece of furniture and crockery in the room—ewers, basins, jerries and all! It shows how forceful had been the effect of this nightmare and what a super-human effort I made when, in terror, I gave that mighty heave.

One of these merry practical jokers was a young, well-bred lieutenant, a Canadian, who possessed a charming tenor voice. The song which he sang so well, and which we begged him to sing again and again, was "Roses are blooming in Picardy". This was quite one of the best sentimental songs of that period, and there are readers of my own generation who will recall it. One day he and some of the staff were bathing off the dangerous sands at Paris-Plage, and he was caught by the tide and drowned. Whenever I find myself singing the words of that song, "Roses are blooming in Picardy", I think of that charming young man, who had been through so much of the fighting, only to meet his end in this tragic way at Paris-Plage.



## THE FOREST OF DREUX

**M**Y next move was unexpected and unlooked-for. Amongst the officers who came to have a look, as the news spread that my pictures were to be seen on the walls of the representative's headquarters, there were two colonels, both in the Canadian Forestry Corps, one of them a veterinary. To describe the heartiness and enthusiasm of a true-born Canadian is not easy—I leave it to the reader to imagine these two colonels, persuading me that I must go with them and see the companies of Canadian Forestry who were then working in the many beautiful forests in France. They not only persuaded me—they assured me, in spite of more orders from London to return, that they were going to kidnap me and all my paraphernalia and take me with them, beginning, they said, with the Forest of Conché in Normandy. If I remember rightly, Lord Lovat, who was in command of the forestry, was then at the headquarters in Paris-Plage. Perhaps he was consulted—he had seen the pictures—and finally, with General Simms' blessing, I started afresh on another adventure—an adventure which had no danger and no risks and which took me into some beautiful parts of France.

What is better than a good meal in good company at a good inn? Next to that, the memory of it. I would not class the memory of such a lunch as we had at the Grand Cerf at Evreux as a minor memory either. French interpreters were there, who joined us after apéritifs. From the select *hors d'œuvres* to the coffee it was a feast. The picture is plainly stamped on my memory for the reason that I had not tasted such food and wine for months. I see the exterior of the hotel, its window-boxes full of bright flowers; a place which nobody with a love of the right thing could pass without stopping. Then, suffused with the afterglow of food and wine, we went to the cathedral, and then on to one of those French Government Studs, where stallions of many breeds are stabled. We saw strength, beauty and movement combined in the Percheron horses. Standing at the end of a long, lofty stable, seeing in perspective, in stall after stall, a row of great dappled hindquarters—my imagination lit with wine—I pictured the scene at Branksome Tower in "The Lay of the Last

Minstrel", about the "steeds both fleet and wight" which "stood saddled in stable day and night". The stables, the horses, the attendants in red, postilion jackets, and the Grand Cerf itself were things to see again, and I made a resolve that, whatever happened, I would return there after the war. Alas! I never did. Now, in a world of increasing mechanisation, the sight would never be the same.

The Forest of Conché in Normandy was my first experience of painting with the Forestry. Then came the area of the forest of Dreux, one of the finest in France, taking up fifteen square miles of ground. This was near the beautiful valley of the Eure, which I also determined to revisit but never did. I was taken to the city of Dreux, where I saw in its cathedral that awful, heart-rending memorial in stone to one of Prince Antoine's female Orleans ancestors, a princess, who had died in a fire.

I have memories of that spring in the forest of Dreux. My last picture painted there was of an enormous oak-tree, the king of the forest it was called, and was the largest that had been felled. It was on a perfect April day, under the most divine sunlight, that I painted a French sentry in his blue uniform, with rifle and bayonet, seated on the giant trunk. I put the soldier there to give the scale of its vast proportions. In the background were saplings left standing, piles of timber and a German prisoner or two at work. My French soldier on the tree was the sentry in charge of the prisoners, and as I painted him seated there a small crowd of French peasants had gathered, watching me work. Although I had almost finished, and was getting on quite well, I was bothered by their presence, and remarked that I could get on better if they went away, and that they could see the picture when it was done. Whereat an old grey Frenchman, smoking a cheroot, said to me:

"It is quite good—you have got the sentry—but don't get angry because you are up against a difficulty."

"Ah! Monsieur," said I. "*C'est très, très difficile.*"

"Oui, Monsieur," he replied, and I was left alone.

I remember speculating on the age of that oak and wondering how large it was during the Napoleonic Wars, when the French were building more and more ships of the line. I thought of the *Redoubtable* and the fatal shot fired from her mizzen-top which killed Nelson, and of the *Bucentaure*, which had carried the French admiral, Villeneuve, an ancestor of the Vicomte in whose château I had been staying with General Seely and his staff. I recalled that in 1805 we were fighting with Germany against France, and that now in 1918 we were fighting with France against Germany.

Next I was sent to what is known as the best-planted and grown forest in France—Bellême, lower down in Normandy. As in other forests, the Canadians were living in wooden huts, and the staff likewise. The mess was in a sort of large log cabin, with a stove at one end, and an iron pipe going out at the top. On these chilly spring evenings the Canadian officers used to sit in an awful fug, but in spite of the fog I spent pleasant hours with them—and learned to respect and admire Canadians.

These lumbermen were grand fellows. Their speech, dress, cast of countenance and expression belonged to the illimitable forest spaces of Canada. They brought the spirit of the North-West into the French forests. Each company had a hundred and twenty horses, all half-bred Percheron types, mostly blacks and greys. A rivalry existed between the companies as to which had the best-conditioned teams. I painted pictures of these teams at work, pictures of men axing, sawing down trees and finally in the Jura, I painted a landscape with men at work building and constructing a new saw-mill. In each forest they took over, their first move was to build a saw-mill. As I sat painting this prospect, a wide-stretching, pale blue lake was my distant background—piles of sawn planks, horses and waggons were in the foreground, whilst in the middle of the picture was the framework of the mill going up, with the men at work.

I travelled from the forest of Bellême to this country of the Jura with the correspondent of the *Montreal Star*, Rowland Hill, and his escorting officer, a Scottish Canadian. Again in one of those fine Cadillac cars, driven by a good chauffeur, we journeyed, with a few breaks, via Dijon to Andelot, and there stayed in a clean and most wonderful little hotel with all its rooms painted white. Then on to Nozeroy, Arbois, Courvoisier and Lons-le-Saulnier, the old capital of the Jura. We had never been in this country, and had little dreamed of such towns surrounded by vineyards on hillsides, overlooking deep valleys. In one sequestered spot—quite by chance through taking a wrong turning—we came upon a vast Abbey church, unlike anything we had ever seen or imagined—it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Lons-le-Saulnier. I revisited this remote church later in the summer, taking the colonel and some officers to see it. We travelled many miles in trying to find it. Often have I wished that I could make yet another visit to that country, but something has always prevented me from doing it.

On Sundays officers went in cars to this place or that, sight-seeing. I was taken to Stendahl's country, to Besançon and to Ornans on the Doubs River, the birthplace of Courbet. In the

art gallery at Besançon I saw one of his largest canvases—a picture of a stag at bay in the snow, surrounded by a furious, exhausted pack of hounds. On the right-hand side are two men: one on foot with spear and dagger, the other on a rearing, dapple-grey horse. This horse is painted three-quarter back view, and is quite one of the most superb paintings of a horse that I know. I went again on other Sundays to see the picture hanging in lonely state in those galleries. It was far too large to move into the cellars where the rest of the art treasures were stored, and so it took its chance and remained isolated upon its wall.

At this time things were looking up and people cheerful. The German attack had failed and their armies were at last on the run.

One of my pleasantest memories of the Jura was of a long walk around a lake, starting out early from a small hotel at Malbuisson and finishing there in the evening. The lake was fifteen kilometres round. My last rest was in a village on the far side, where I sat in the garden of an inn, watching the children, who had come home from school, driving herds of cows, one after another, from each farm in the village street, to pastures surrounding a wide lake below. The herds consisted of about fifteen to twenty cows. Some had bells slung around their necks, and they came out of each farmyard, through an archway into the street, to the music of the bells,—one herd being kept apart from the other by the children. As they passed the garden where I was sitting, I admired the way the children managed their charges. The last herd went by to the music of bells, and having had tea, my route lying in the same direction, I followed behind to see what was happening. Soon we passed the last houses, and the first herds were already descending towards the lake, guided by the shouting children. Then, boys with poplar twigs in their hands rushed off down the pasture, sticking the twigs in the ground, running on for another twenty yards or so, placing more twigs, until they had made a square. In this unrailed space a family of children kept its cows, and if one truculent heifer,—tail in the air,—tried to bolt towards another lot it was pursued by shouting boys and dogs and driven back to its enclosure.

As I followed the curving road along the lake, seeing more cows and more children, listening to the sweet sound of the bells as twilight fell and the mists rose from the lake, I became sentimental. Watching those happy, healthy boys and girls, some with bare feet, some with sodden boots and socks, in the long, dew-drenched grass, I thought of our queerly educated English children at home. I could not imagine them doing anything like this.

The Jura is the land of the Gruyère cheese, and in this particular village where I was painting, and where the Canadians were quartered, there were two or three small cheese factories.

One of my pictures in the Jura had nothing to do with the Canadians. It was of a little dun-coloured bull in a plough, with a peasant cleaning the coulter; behind was a mass of white cow-parsley, and beyond that the blue hills. One night, after painting the bull, its owner asked me into his kitchen to have some supper, introducing me to his daughters, and he told me that if I cared to stop I could marry one of them!

At last urgent messages came that "Munnings was to return home". Other artists had to be sent out. Once more in Paris, with my former companions of the *Montreal Star*, we experienced the effect of long-range shelling from Big Bertha, a gun miles away, and saw the Folies Bergère quickly cleared, though packed, only minutes before. An illustration here is a memento of one of those nights when I returned and found the two correspondents asleep and snoring.

Collecting all my pictures, which were now hard and dry, at Paris-Plage, and putting them in one large roll into the trusty box, I was escorted to Boulogne, seen on to the boat, met at Dover, and finally reached London. This ended my painting adventures in France during 1917-1918.



*Orpen's portrait of me*

## I FIND A STUDIO

ALTHOUGH it was strange and unexciting to be back again in London, with no Canadians to paint and with no more jolly nights in the mess, I could not be sorry, for who could be sorry, knowing that in France the tide of war had turned, with the Battle of the Marne long since over and the whole German Army in retreat?

In the weeks following my arrival in England I stayed at the Chelsea Arts Club, and having brought back such a quantity of pictures, I had to look for a studio. I was now forty, and until then had never had a London studio, my work being sent up from the country to agents for delivery to the Academy or various exhibitions. It was not difficult to find an excellent studio after the First World War. The one I discovered and decided to take, at sixty-five pounds a year, was in Glebe Place; it was large and well-lit, with a bedroom and the usual offices. Stretchers were ordered, canvases stretched, and a suitable pattern of frame was decided on and made.

Paul Konody, the *Observer* critic, who had been giving out these commissions for the Canadian Government, approved of what I had done and said he little expected to see such a variety of subjects and so much work. But I still had to keep to my first contract: to paint a large canvas representing some happening with the Canadian Cavalry. An enormous canvas came and was placed on the easel. With the help of a young New Zealand officer, who was a good artist, we squared it up from one of my brigade pictures, chosen as the most fitting subject to enlarge. The picture was never carried to a finish, because I had so many interruptions with other work which had to be done. Konody thought that, all things considered, I had done more than my share, and one day, meeting the Minister of Information, Sir Max Aitken, I came to a settlement for the price of these forty-five canvases painted in France. The amount was small, but I would have been prepared, had they so wished, to present them to the Canadian Government, for no artist had ever been given a better chance to paint in such unforeseen circumstances. Mine had been a wonderful experience.

The cavalry and forestry pictures brought me luck. The

Canadian War Records Exhibition was held early in 1919 at the Academy, and my forty-five paintings, shown together, occupied the walls of Gallery IX. It was through these pictures that I was elected an associate in the Spring.

I recall now the morning in the autumn of 1918 when Richard Jack, R.A., came to my studio in Glebe Place.

"What do you think of the Academy? Would you care to have your name put down for election?"

These were the questions he was asking me, before I realised the meaning of his visit. Being a countryman, with no studio in London, I knew nothing of the ways of election to the Academy. Besides, my work had been skied there so often that latterly I had sent only small pictures, submitting what I thought my best work to the Grosvenor Gallery, which, alas! like all blessings of its kind, has passed away.

"But would you like to become a member?" he said.

"Of course," I replied, knowing I should never be one.

He looked at the canvases which then were ready framed for the coming exhibition of War Records, and departed.

One evening in the spring of 1919 I walked round to the Chelsea Arts Club near by. As I hung up my hat, a member said:

"Well, do you know you've been made an A.R.A.?"

This I couldn't believe, and my response was not sprightly. Other members and friends came and said it was true. Still I could not believe it. Then in came a sculptor, Derwent Wood, an irascible sort of fellow—a member of the Academy, just back from the election.

"Oh, yes," said he, "it's true enough—but mind you, I didn't vote for you; I voted for a gentleman!"

Never have I forgotten the moment—the words—his sardonic grin and the roars of laughter. Anyhow, we made a night of it, and the next day an Academy attendant and models came round to the studio to announce it.

All was well—I was actually an A.R.A. There are those to-day in the Academy who would foolishly do away with this first distinction of associateship which so many artists have battled for. It would be a crime against those who made the rules one hundred and fifty years ago. Already my ambition after the election was to work and win the next honour—that of being a full R.A. It was a stirring event for me at the time. Little did I dream that I should ever become P.R.A., or that I should grow any older in mind or body.

My last picture to do with the war was a portrait of the Earl of

Athlone, in uniform, on his charger. Princess Alice had seen my portrait of General Seely in the Exhibition of Canadian War Records at the Academy early in 1919, and had asked me to paint the portrait. My stay at Windsor Castle, where I painted this portrait, was not without happenings. I had arranged to go there in the late afternoon, arriving just before dinner. All my things had been packed and placed ready in my studio in Glebe Place in the morning. Having been lately elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, I was invited, with the rest of its members, to the annual luncheon-party given by Lord Leverhulme at his house in Golders Green, a home with a magnificent collection of English pictures. This lunch, like all other things after that first war, was a terrific affair, and after much toasting and many speeches, the party broke up.

I returned to my studio, and later, with my paraphernalia, caught a train from Paddington to Windsor. Next morning we stood at the front door, Lord Athlone in uniform, Princess Alice, the butler and myself, whilst outside the door stood a chestnut horse, held by a groom. All was ready to begin the portrait; I had my easel, my canvas and other necessities, but I had forgotten my paint-box. It was left on the floor in the studio in Glebe Place! Thus do things happen after luncheon parties. I at once went to the telephone, rang up the steward of the Chelsea Arts Club, who had the keys of my studio, told him to go to the studio, get the paint-box, and bring it down on the next train. In the meantime Lord Athlone took me to the stables to see the grey and bay horses, which were to be used in the Ascot procession. As we were coming away, we met the kind Princess Alice, with John the steward, carrying my paint-box—she was bringing him to the stables to find me.

A sequel to this is that in the afternoon, having found a quiet spot in the park, with Lord Athlone seated on the horse, and the canvas ready, I opened my paint-box, and there inside lay an envelope! I opened this, and found a bill for eighty-five pounds from the Chelsea Arts Club to me, which John had placed there, perhaps as a gentle reminder! An unkind joke. Nevertheless, it showed the reckless manner in which some of us were living after the First World War.



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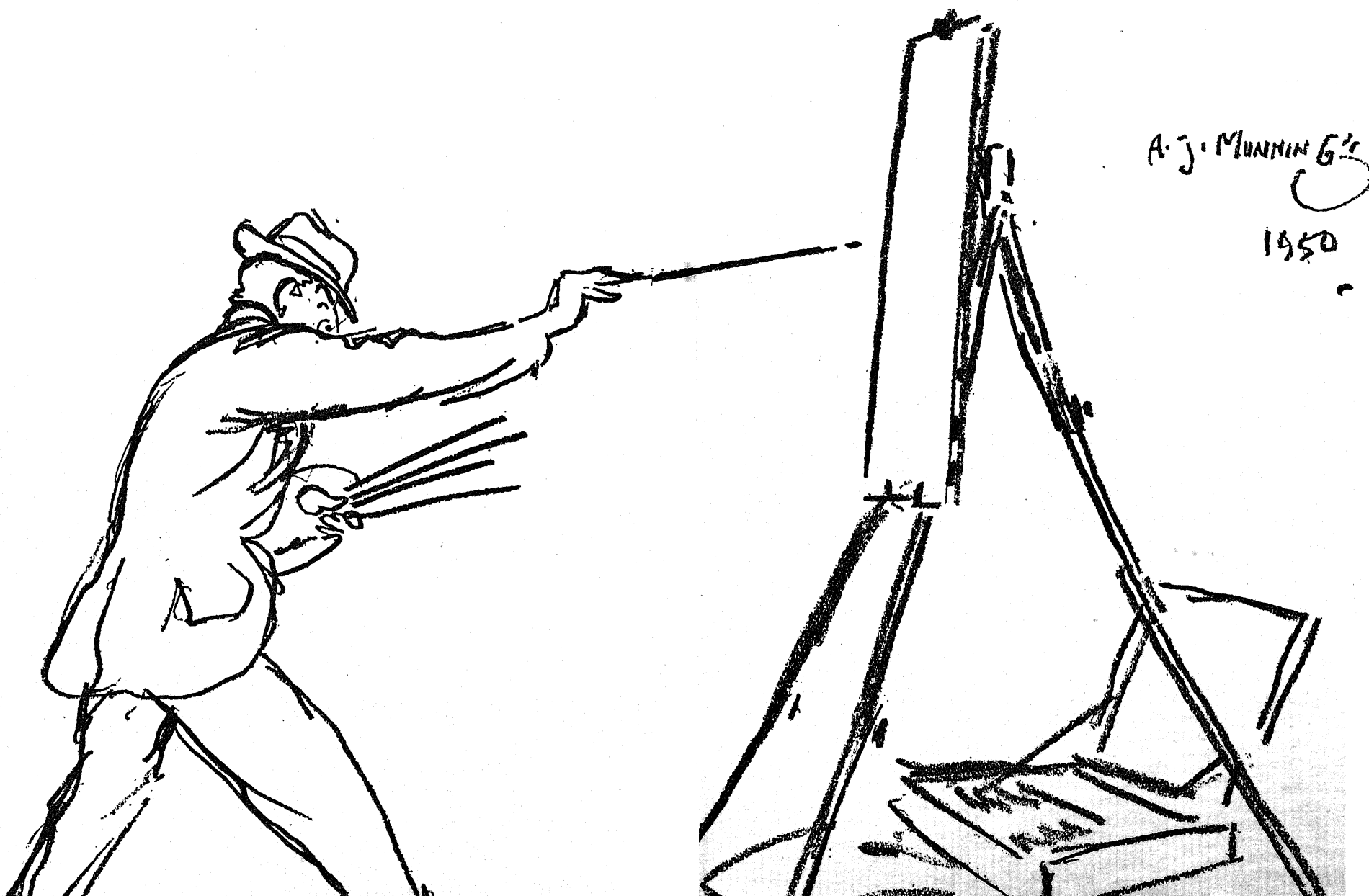
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